

REFORMATION TODAY'83



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Editorial

Martin Luther was born 500 years ago. John Nicholls reminds us of the intensity of Luther's experience. The greatest need of the universal Church today is to experience afresh the power of God! This power is not the power generated by a tambourine. It is the power of God revealed in the procuring and imputing of the Righteousness of Jehovah. The Gospel is powerful because therein is revealed the only garment that will save — the robe of righteousness. At the conclusion of the section with the heading, 'no peace', Mr. Nicholls refers to Luther's greatest achievement. Surely that was to bring the Church to the foundation of *Sola Scriptura*, which subject is being contested all over again in our day. Gwynne Williams in his work on Montanism refers to this principle of Scripture only, the foundation of all our foundations.

At the Carey Conference in January, Bob Sheehan presented an historical survey showing how the reformation of the 16th century was used to bring the Church to the Rock of Scripture. Pastor Sheehan's paper is ready to appear in the next issue of *Reformation Today*.

The impossibility of adding to Scripture is a conclusion to which we come as we follow the exposition on Biblical Theology by Don Garlington. How can anything be added when Christ has spoken finally and completely?

Eldership in retrospect

When the practice of rule by elders does not work out it is not because there is anything wrong with the doctrine. In retrospect it is almost always a case of

inadequate attention having been given to the qualifications required. Charles Whitworth has laid out the data for us with unmistakable clarity. Such material is always current, always relevant. The first question is: does a man by his present activity show himself to be a shepherd? The second question: does he have the qualifications?

Reporting the conferences

The conferences that are reported in these pages fulfil a number of uses. One is sheer education. The materials are designed to improve the quality of our ministry. We seek to advance in our skills and learn from each other. This is an excellent way of broadening and deepening our biblical and historic perspectives. The Carey Conference is particularly helpful with regard to sharing with others of like mind. In contrast the Westminster gathering fulfils a very different purpose. Overseas readers and those for the most part cut off by distance are especially in mind as we prepare these reports.

Book reviews

Included among books received for review is the excellent biography of the first 40 years of the life of Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones by Iain Murray (Banner). To illustrate the breadth of edifying material this contains, Leith Samuel made this his subject at the Whitefield Fraternal in February. The presentation was both educating and scintillating. Up-to-date catalogues of the Carey Conference and Whitefield cassette ministry are available (25p incl. post).

Subscription charges

Regrettably these are raised to keep up with inflation, but in such a way that it is a bargain to subscribe for two years rather than one.

Front cover: *Jonathan Anayunde of Nigeria is spending six months at Welwyn having been brought over with his family by the Welwyn Evangelical Church. The purpose is for study. Jonathan was able to attend the Carey Conference in January. Here he is pictured with Bob Sheehan on his left and Bernard Honeysett on his right.*

by John Nicholls, London

Martin Luther 1483-1546

This year is the 500th anniversary of the birth of Martin Luther. In this brief sketch of his life, John Nicholls concentrates on the great Reformer's spiritual pilgrimage.

In July 1505 there was a thunderstorm near Erfurt in Germany and a streak of lightning brought a young student close to death. Doubtless the event went unnoticed in the courts of Europe, but had kings and cardinals known the significance it was to assume, they would have forsaken their petty concerns with wars and wealth and concentrated all their attention on that young novice of the Erfurt monastery who was destined to turn their world upside down. The student, one Martin Luther, was then 21, having been born in November 1483. He was so impressed by his narrow escape that he enrolled in the Reformed Congregation of the Eremitical Order of St Augustine (the Augustinian Eremites for short) in Erfurt. There he studied for the next four years. At that stage, Luther seems to have been a fervent follower of the 'modern way' — the medieval theology and philosophy known as Nominalism. Of two of its leading writers he jotted down, 'Scotus, Ockham were English. The French could never produce people like that!' But a man is a living soul, not just a mind, and Luther's spiritual concern was already affecting his intellectual equanimity. In 1507 the novice passed on to the celebration of his first Mass, a climactic event in a system which ascribes miraculous powers to the priesthood. Despite a moral upbringing Luther was plagued by a sense of guilt, and the impending Mass served to focus this into a beam of agony which penetrated his soul. As he meditated before the service he asked himself, 'Who am I, that I should lift up mine eyes or raise my hands to the divine Majesty? The angels surround him. At his nod the earth trembles. And shall I, a miserable little pygmy, say "I want this; I ask for that"? For I am dust and ashes, and full of sin, and I am speaking to the living, eternal and true God.'

This view of the majesty of God stupefied Luther and produced in him that 'Anfechtung', or terror of the Holy, which was to be such an influence in his later thought. Bainton defines it as 'all the doubt, turmoil, pang, tremor, panic, despair, desolation and desperation which invade the spirit of man'. Martin survived his first Mass, but the doubts and guilt did not vanish, despite all the accumulated wisdom of the monastic system, and all the fanatical zeal with which he gave himself to ascetic exercises.

For a short period in 1508 Luther was transferred to Wittenberg to lecture on Aristotle, the dominant influence behind Medieval thinking. Then in 1511, after a visit to Rome which gave him first-hand experience of the decadence and corruption of the Church, he returned to Wittenberg to complete his doctorate (a rare achievement in those days). He was prevailed upon by his tutor and counsellor, Johann von Staupitz, to accept the Chair of Biblical Theology, which he retained until his death. All this while his theology had been

developing as he began to read Augustine's works and to question and reject much of the accepted theology of the day. His professorship was undertaken with a deep sense of responsibility, and his vow 'to defend the Word of God and to drive away all erroneous and strange doctrines' was often the rock on which he fell back in days when all seemed to be urging him to desist.

No Peace

But his own soul still knew no peace. Along with his ascetic practices Luther now gave himself to a study of mysticism, but although he derived many insights he was unable to achieve that 'liberating' experience which is the mystic's path of salvation. Indeed, his experience grew darker still, and he was plagued by the fear that the arbitrary God of the medieval theologians might have predestined him to destruction. He seems to be describing his own anguish when, much later, he wrote:

'I knew a man who said that he had often suffered these infernal torments in the shortest possible compass of time, so great and infernal that "nor tongue nor pen can show", nor can those believe who have not experienced; so that if they were completed, or lasted half an hour, or even the tenth part of an hour, he would utterly perish, and his bones be reduced to ashes. Then God appears horribly angry, and with him the whole creation. This is the soul stretched out with Christ, so that all his bones can be numbered, nor is there any corner not filled with the most bitter bitterness, horror, fear, dolour; but all these things seem eternal.'

His friend Staupitz told him that 'in the wounds of Christ is predestination found, and nowhere else'; but this was not enough as yet. Staupitz's wisdom in pressing Luther to that professorship where he must lecture on the Scriptures, proved to be the crucial factor. He began to study the Bible minutely, commencing his lectures on the Psalms in August 1513. The intricacies of the medieval interpretation of the Bible were abandoned — 'Our first concern will be for the grammatical meaning, for this is the truly theological meaning' — and Luther pioneered a valid, Biblical way of expounding the Scriptures. In many ways this was his greatest achievement, bar none.

The Heart of the Gospel

Soon Luther passed on from Psalms to Romans, and it was in studying Paul's letter that he came upon the heart of the Gospel. His doubts as to the justice of an arbitrary God, and his own despair of ever achieving a righteousness (or, justice) of God revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, The just shall live by faith.' Luther tells us:

'Night and day I pondered until I saw the connection between the justice of God and the statement that the just shall live by faith. Then I grasped that the justice of God is that righteousness by which, through grace and sheer mercy, God justifies us through faith. Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise. The whole of Scripture took on a new meaning. . . .'

Then I grasped that the justice of God is that righteousness by which, through grace and sheer mercy, God justifies us through faith. Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise.

This so-called 'Tower Experience' of Luther has been the subject of much controversy. But two things seem clear: firstly, that it marked his deliverance from the dreadful experience of 'anfechtung' into a joyful Christian assurance; secondly, that it marks the consummation of his gradual rejection of medieval theology in favour of the Biblical gospel, as taught not only in the Scriptures but also in Augustine. His 'Lectures on Romans' (1515) display virtually the whole of his mature evangelical theology. This great change in Martin Luther had been brought about, not by his performance of religious duties, nor by ascending some 'ladder' of mystical experiences, but by a careful study of the Bible's record of the historical, finished work of Jesus Christ, enlightened by the Holy Spirit.

To this point in his life, Luther had made no wide impact. It was not until October 1517, when he nailed his '95 Theses' against indulgences to the door of Wittenberg church that he entered the public eye. His protest against the corruption of saving Christianity represented by Indulgences struck a chord in a society that was increasingly anti-clerical, nationalistic and impatient with the financial extortions of the church. It is intriguing to trace the threads which came together in Luther's Reformation — the teachings of the humanists, the growth of the German urban middle classes, the alienation between Germany and Italy, the birth of printing and the hunger for literature, and many other factors, all had a role in the transformation which followed: Luther, for instance, had close ties with the printers and within a fortnight of his Theses being posted at Wittenberg they were being read all over Germany. And for the next six or seven years there was a veritable flood of publications by Luther. His teachings were presented in the most vigorous and popular language — he had a deep hatred of empty jargon. No one had more vivid and numerous ways of calling a spade a spade.

Public Trials

Of course, he was called on to defend his teaching in public trials as well as in the written page. In July 1519 he debated at Leipzig and was denounced as a follower of John Huss, burnt as a heretic the previous century. In April 1521 he

courageously went to Worms to appear before the Imperial Diet. His stand now involved a rejection of papal authority as well as a protest against current abuses. The papal 'bull' against him was burnt by Luther and his students and a new beginning was made with an evangelical church. In this task Luther's role was as central but not as spectacular nor as successful as in the negative work of shaking Rome's grip upon Germany. His greatest contribution was undoubtedly his translation of the Bible into German, a work which moulded the whole language. His crystal-clear grasp of the truth that God saves us with an 'alien righteousness', so that the ungodly are justified, was the core of his contribution to the teaching, worship and piety of the church. In other things this most conservative of rebels was less successful. Reacting against the populism and extravagances of the radicals he placed the control of the church in the hands of the princes and corporations of Germany — with dire consequences for future generations. His irascibility betrayed him into conflicts which divided youthful Protestantism between 'Lutheran' and 'Reformed' and his strange doctrine of a physical presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper has proved a source of corruption in Lutheran theology ever since. But no such weaknesses must ever be allowed to degrade Luther in our estimation. They are but spots on the sun.

In 1525 Luther married Catherin von Bora, a former nun. Though their home can have known little peace and quiet, their relationship was a great support to Martin and their hospitality was almost boundless. Some of their guests jotted down the meal-time remarks of the great Doctor, and thus was formed that volume of 'table talk' which contains so many startling and revealing shafts of light from his fertile mind.

Luther died peacefully, in the process of healing divisions within the churches. His best memorial is provided by his most famous hymn:

*By our own strength is nothing won.
We court at once disaster.
There fights for us the Champion
Whom God has named our Master.
Would you know his name?
Jesus Christ the same
Lord Sabbaoth is he.
No other God can be.
The field is his to hold it.*

The best biography of Luther is Roland Bainton's Here I Stand. (Price £1.25.)

*This article first appeared in the Monthly Record of the Free Church of Scotland.
We acknowledge our indebtedness to the author and to that journal.*

The wonderful names of our God

Everywhere in Scripture we find that stress is laid on the names of God. For instance in Isaiah 42:8 we read, 'I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another.' Both at the beginning and the end of Psalm 8 the writer marvels at the glory of the name of God. 'How majestic is your name in all the earth!' 'Hallowed be *thy name*' is the first petition of the Lord's prayer. We are to love the name of God and call upon his name in intercession (Is. 56:6; Gen. 4:26; Ps. 105:1).

Some theologians (Bavinck, Ten Hoor) have, in expounding the attributes of God, chosen to do so entirely under the names of God. The names by which the Lord describes himself reveal aspects of his character. By his names he reveals to us his attributes.

The subject of the employment of names is illustrated in the case of Adam. Adam was able to capture or discern the nature and spirit of the animals that were created. To each he gave an appropriate name which would be full of meaning. The first names employed for humans expressed character or purpose. From Isaiah chapter 8 to chapter 9 we move from the use of names for men to their use for Deity. When it comes to God's names we are in a different and exalted plane. Let us therefore proceed with care and deep respect.

The names of God in the Old Testament

One of the saddest mistakes being made today is to set the New Testament against the Old. It is the same Divine Being speaking and revealing himself in both. The two are entirely complementary. It is only by the whole that we have a full and perfect revelation of the character and attributes of God. There is a fuller and richer revelation of names both of the Father and the Son in the Old than in the New.

Obviously we are not able in such a short space to reckon with all the names so I will outline the main ones. *Elohim* is the first name ascribed to God in the Bible. In the beginning *Elohim* created. This name is more frequent than the others and is mostly translated God. The meaning conveyed is one of immense power. The name 'El' — God is often joined to the names of people or places. Thus, *Elijah*, *Elisha*, *Bethel*, *Penuel*. *El-Shaddai* is a compound word (El for God and Shaddai for Almighty) which points to the all sufficiency of God. All things are made by him and controlled by him — he is almighty.

Another name for God is 'Holy' (Hebrew: *qadosh*). God's name is Holy (Is. 40:25). The expression, 'the Holy One of Israel', occurs about 30 times in Isaiah. Often it is a direct reference to Christ as our Redeemer. The word 'One' has been added in the English translation, the Holy One, because it would look and sound strange simply to have, 'the Holy'. The only true God is very jealous about this attribute of holiness. Therefore we should not be surprised to find that 'Holy' is one of his titles. The holiness of God is everywhere stressed in Scripture and often with the direct application that we should be holy (Lev. 19:2;

1 Pet. 1:15, 16). Are you holy? This is one of the first tests of whether a person is a Christian because it says that without holiness no man will see God. Do you know where it says that? if you have to find it on your own you will remember it better. But now we remember that one of God's names is HOLY — simply that one word HOLY.

God's most exalted and most famous name

YAHWEH from the consonants YHWH from which we get the word *Jehovah*, was held in such reverence by the Jews that they refused to pronounce it. Because they held this name in such awe they used the word *Adonai* in its place. *Adonai* literally means 'my Lord', and in most English versions it appears as the LORD. Note the capital letters, which tell us that this precious name Jahweh — Jehovah — has been used.

But what does Jahweh mean? The meaning of this title was unveiled to Moses. Do you remember that scene in the desert and the burning bush, the bush that burned but did not consume?

Moses said to God, 'Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, "The God of your fathers has sent me to you", and they ask me, "What is his name? Then what shall I tell them?" God said to Moses, "I am who I am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: "I AM has sent me to you."'

What we learn from this title is that God is self-existent. He is uncreated. He is independent. He is unique. He is life. He is the only living one. He is the eternal Deity who was, and is, and is to come. The New Testament explanation is found in Revelation 1:4, 'Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come'. This name *par excellence* is given to Christ, see Philippians 2:9.

This wonderful name of God is joined to us by grace for it is a covenant title, *Jehovah-eloahay* — meaning 'Jehovah my God' (Zech. 14:5) and, *Jehovah-eloheenu* — meaning 'Jehovah our God' (Ps. 99:5, 7, 8). The name Yahweh or Jehovah is used to convey the truth that all the mighty attributes are being used on behalf of those who love him. The omnipotent 'I AM' is with us.

In conflict he is our JEHOVAH-NISSI, Jehovah our banner (Ex. 17:15).

In our need he is our JEHOVAH-JIREH, The LORD will provide (Gen. 22:14).

In salvation he is JEHOVAH-TSIDKENU, The LORD our righteousness (Jer. 23:6).

In sickness he is our JEHOVAH-ROPHI, Jehovah who heals (Ex. 15:26).

In the new world to all eternity he will be our God present with us, that is JEHOVAH SHAMMAH, The LORD is there (Ez. 48:35).

In troubled times when fear threatens to overwhelm us then he is JEHOVAH-SHALOM, the LORD our peace (Judg. 6:24; Phil. 4:7).

In situations of danger, need of care and guidance he is JEHOVAH-ROHI, the LORD my Shepherd (Ps. 23:1; 80:1).

In that season when the enemy comes in like a flood then he is our

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The Westminster Conference – Alive and Well!

The conference with the title *Westminster* used to be called The *Puritan* Conference which in actual fact is more descriptive of its nature. It takes place for two days in December every year. The venue, Westminster Chapel, provides its present title.

There are always six contributions, each of which is supposed to take an hour or less. Despite efforts to improve the situation there is an incurable tendency to overstep the sixty minutes allotted for the reading of a paper.

The cure lies in the giving of a trial reading before the time to anyone willing to listen. The conference last December began with a contribution by Tony Lane who lectures in historical theology at London Bible College. His subject was John Calvin: The witness of the Spirit. It was refreshing to have a very clear outline printed up and distributed to all those present. Mr. Lane follows Calvin's position that faith and assurance go together and that it is wrong to look introspectively for corroboration by way of good works to support assurance. The question was debated in detail. As usual, 2 Peter 1 was brought forward. The Puritans developed the doctrine of faith and works in much more detail than did Calvin. It is this dimension of faith and works which is missing in Calvin. The debate showed that the consensus present preferred the Puritan position as far more satisfactory. Faith without works is dead. Show me your faith by your works. We are to add to our faith. A holy life with all the proofs of the new birth, moral, spiritual and doctrinal, which are demanded by John in his first epistle, are essential credentials for

assurance. If we lack them we have no right whatever to assurance and that surely is what John the apostle is emphasising. Works complement faith. The stronger a practical life of godliness the stronger reason and basis for assurance. Of course a wrong kind of introspection or morbidity must be firmly rejected. Also it must be recognised that there is enough evil in our best works to damn us. Nevertheless the reality and necessity of a very evident godliness which is discovered by self examination is always with us (2 Cor. 13:5). Examine yourself whether you be in the Faith.

As in other subjects such as law and grace we must be very careful not to put friends on a collision course. Faith and works are friends providing faith is put first, and the more faith there is the more good works there are likely to be.

The second paper was delivered by Pastor Andrew Davies who recently moved from Chessington back to his native country of Wales to take up a pastorate there. He spoke on the subject of the Holy Spirit in Puritan Experience. It was a fine paper and, like the others, will be valuable when it appears in print. Typical of the style of this conference this paper was well laced with juicy and helpful quotations. Pastor Davies suggested that there were about 200 spiritual biographies in print before 1725. Very few of these are available today. We might ask what the publishers are doing about this particular area of neglect?

The third paper was presented by the minister of Cole Abbey Presbyterian Church, near St. Pauls, London, John Nicholls. Personally, I enjoyed this biographical presentation more than anything else at the conference and look forward to profiting further from it in print. Halyburton (which is the correct spelling) 1674-1712, lived a short but intense life. His conversion experience

was unusual. Archibald Alexander thought very highly of Halyburton and esteemed him as one of Scotland's best theologians. He was minister at Ceres from 1700 to 1710. His health was already failing when he moved to become professor of divinity at St. Andrews. Two years later he died. His memoirs became his best known written work. His deathbed exercises and speeches are found in Archibald Alexander's book, *Thoughts on Religious Experience*, published by the Banner of Truth. One of Halyburton's heartcries was, 'Oh! that this generation would awake to seek after the quickening influences of the Spirit!' That is surely our great need too. Halyburton made it plain that it was not a firecracker show he was seeking but rather the work of the Holy Spirit that would lead to the conviction and conversion of sinners (these matters are recorded in Alexander's work pp. 214 ff).

Roger W. Welsh tackled a subject of considerable complexity and one which was very hard to present in an orderly fashion, namely on the Quakers, Ranters and Puritan Mystics. Again we must wait for the materials to be published to really get to grips with some of the lessons extracted from this particular approach of studying those with fanatical or extremist tendencies.

Several points were raised for discussion but the time was totally inadequate to do justice to them. They were:

1. Where does temperament enter into extreme positions and what role does temperament play?
2. What do social and political conditions have to do with radicalism?
3. How much has over-reaction to formalism, dead-orthodoxy and arid intellectualism given rise to extreme or fanatical positions?
4. Where does the geographical factor enter in and how much must this be

considered as a factor? Where the churches are weak and poorly taught there sectarianism evidently grows much more quickly.

All these matters are very relevant for today. Especially with the charismatic movement it is transparently obvious that temperament does play a major role. We have done far too little to take this into consideration. Furthermore, extreme positions are often taken as a result of formalism, dead-orthodoxy and arid intellectualism. Again, it would not be difficult to show that where there is a lively teaching ministry that there is less likelihood of unbalanced positions being taken up together with all the painful divisions which accompany them.

It must be observed too that sometimes churches are accused of being formalistic and dry when in fact such criticism is not really warranted. There are the equivalents of the extreme positions of the Puritan age with us today who are quite ruthless in their seizing whatever members they can from other churches, and who blatantly encourage division wherever they deem themselves superior to other assemblies, and that superiority is applied in 90% of cases!

From these remarks our readers will see that this conference which is really devoted to historical theology is relevant in every way. Invaluable are the lessons that we learn from parallel situations in the history and pilgrimage of Christ's church.

Graham Harrison began attending the Puritan Conference in 1955 (I also began that year). He has been pastoring the Emmanuel Baptist Church, Newport, Wales for 20 years. He lectures in systematic theology at the London Theological Seminary. Hymns by both Graham and his wife, Eluned, appear in our hymnbook *Christian Hymns*. Graham presented a paper on

Ferment in New England concentrating on the reactions to the Great Awakening. The basic background information is to be found in another book published by the Banner of Truth, *The Great Awakening* by Joseph Tracy. Our attention was drawn to the extraordinary change in society that takes place when there is a genuine spiritual awakening. The area of America which was most affected from 1840 to 1845 resulted in up to as many as 50,000 converts out of a population of 250,000. These converts, unlike the claims made today, were those who were truly added to the churches, not exaggerated reports but statistics based on an assessment 'after the blossoms had fallen off'. Such an increase in Britain today would represent about ten million converts!

Described in the paper was the violent reaction of men like Presbyterian minister Chauncy who denounced the revival as fanaticism. Afterwards, however, he turned out to be Unitarian. The fanaticism of men like James Davenport is noteworthy. He became guilty of wild excesses. For instance, he prayed and fasted for a woman who had for a long time been insane and dumb. On a certain day Davenport gave out that she would be cured at a specific time. On that very day she died and so Davenport claimed the answer to his prayer to be that she was relieved of her infirmity by being taken to heaven! We should note that at one time Davenport seemed to lose his mind altogether but he did recover and eventually came to the point where he repented of his excesses and published a public retraction for what he had done.

During the debate one minister present asserted that the flippancy, lightness and frivolity of those who make great claims for themselves with regard to supernatural revelation and power really shows that they are not in the category of the great revivals of history in which the chief characteristic was an

awesomeness because of the felt fear of God, that is a felt experience of the holiness of God which is the opposite of lightness.

The last paper came from Eric Aldritt of Hinckley, the title: Ferment in Old England — Revival and the Primitive Methodists. The chairman, Paul Cook, had done his homework and provided an excellent introduction to the paper by drawing our attention to the remarkable period of awakenings which took place in England during the period 1800 to 1835. It is always dangerous to quote from one's notes but if my hearing was correct he made the claim that during this period 1800-1835 the Particular Baptists increased from 650 chapels in 1800 to 2,800 in 1850. The Independents likewise showed remarkable increase and reported 500,000 members by 1850. Such was the general increase in the land that the period could be called the 2nd Great Awakening, the 3rd beginning in 1859. If this claim is substantiated it could alter our whole view of the history of evangelicalism in England.

The substance of Pastor Aldritt's paper indicated that great work awaits students to collate materials on the revivals that have taken place among the Methodists and the non-conformist denominations during the early 19th century. When attending the Banner of Truth conference in America last year I met a young church historian, Dr. Thomas J. Nettles, who has, together with L. Russ Bush, produced a splendid history of the Baptists, concentrating particularly on Baptist leaders in North America. It is not only biographical in nature but clarifies and expounds Baptist doctrines and beliefs. The volume traces the history of the Baptists from their origin through the years to their present-day situation. It is a well-documented work encompassing the entire spectrum of what Baptists believe about Scripture in particular. The point

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Elders

by Charles Whitworth

The qualifications for Elders: an analysis of the lists in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1.

Introduction

Quite properly *Reformation Today* has in recent years given much attention to the role and status of the elders in the life of the local church. It has been encouraging too to see fellowships taking steps to establish elderships as part of the ongoing task of Reformation in the church. But there is a danger that we shall simply establish right structures without necessarily having the right men in the office of elder. That is why we need to pay continuing and careful attention to the Pauline lists of qualifications in the Pastoral letters. Neglect of these qualifications has meant that in many churches unreformed elderships have become a hindrance to spiritual advance in the churches.

The basis of this study comes from notes of an address by Principal Alec Motyer at the UCCF Vocation Conference at Harrogate in July 1978. I have reorganized and built up that material. One of my aims (and this is shared by Mr. Motyer) has been to show the benefits of a careful analysis of the text of Scripture. The tabulation of the qualifications has been designed to encourage the student to do this.

The six areas for scrutiny

The qualifications for the elder listed by the Apostle Paul are summarized in the Table under six headings:

1. His person, 2. His relationships, 3. His home, 4. His work, 5. In the world, 6. In the church.

In the table the transliterated Greek is given alongside the appropriate qualification and the English translations used are generally those of the NIV.

The fact that in the listings the overwhelming stress is not so much on the skills the elder possesses for his task but the godliness of character that he displays reminds us immediately that as in the NT throughout, usefulness presupposes holiness of life.

The six areas for scrutiny

1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9

1 TIMOTHY

TITUS

1. his person

(i) the disqualifications

(a) self-indulgence

3:2 temperate

(*nēphalion*)

3:3 not given to much

wine (*mē paroinon*)

1:7 not given to much

wine (*mē paroinon*)

1 TIMOTHY

TITUS

(b) self-seeking

3:4 not a lover of money
(*aphilarguron*)

1:7 not pursuing dishonest gain
(*mē aichrokerdē*)

(ii) the qualifications

(a) integrated and controlled personality

3:2 self-controlled
(*sōphrona*)

1:8 self controlled
(*sōphrona*)

1:7 not quick-tempered
(*mē orgilon*)

(b) holiness of character (*hosios*) and life (*dikaios*)

1:8 upright, holy
(*dikaion, hosion*)

(c) concern for moral standards

1:8 loves what is good
(*philagathon*)

2. his relationships

(i) gently amenable

3:3 gentle (*epieikēs*)

1:7 not overbearing
(*mē authadē*)

(ii) unaggressive

3:3 not violent
(*mē plēktēn*)

1:7 not violent
(*mē plēktēn*)

3:3 not quarrelsome
(*amachon*)

3. his home

(i) his marriage

3:2 husband of but
one wife (*mias*
gunaikos andra)

1:6 husband of but
one wife (*mias*
gunaikos anēr)

(ii) his children

3:4 [able to] manage his
family well (*tou idiou*
oikoi kalōs proistamenon)

1:6 'whose children are
trustworthy' NIV 'whose
children believe' (*tekna pista*)

3:4 children obey him
(*tekna en hupotagē*)

1:6 children not wild nor
disobedient (*mē asōtias ē*
anupotakta)

(iii) his home

3:2 hospitable (*philoxenon*)

1:8 hospitable (*philoxenon*)

4. his work

(i) its style

3:2 'well organised'
(NIV respectable)
(*cosmion*)

1:8 disciplined
(*egkratē*)

(ii) its focus

3:2 able to teach
(*didaktikos*)

1:9 encouraging others by
sound doctrine (*parakalein en*
tē didaskalia tē hugiainousē)

5. in the world

of good reputation

3:2 above reproach
(*anepilēmpton*)

1:6 & 7 blameless
(*anegklētos*)

3:7 good reputation
(*kalēn marturian*)

6. in the church

neither new convert nor inexperienced

3:6 not a recent convert
(*mē neophuton*)

1:9 hold firmly the trustworthy
message (*antekomenon ton . . .*
piston logon)

Whereas in secular society those who appoint look first at a man's qualifications for the task, his training and his work experience — it is often said that his private life is no concern of the employer — in the church the emphasis is quite opposite. We need to know what a man's character is like as the first requisite when considering appointments to church office. Only after this has been satisfactorily established do we move on to the question of gift for the work to hand. Of course we are not in any either/or situation, setting gifts against grace. But the stress in the apostolic discussion of the appointment *and* work of the elders is on the character of the man so called.

The areas disclosed

1. *His person*: In both listings this is the most important section. The disqualifications function as a screen to keep out unfit candidates. But notice how they illustrate negatively the quality of self control (*sophron*, in the listings in the accusative). It is the characteristic that Paul desires of the older men and women in the fellowship (Titus 2:2, 5). It is to be the mark of Timothy himself (2 Tim. 1:7). It is one of the pre-eminent marks of the spirit-filled man himself — in the Galatians 5 list the cognate word *egkrateia* is used (see Titus 1:8). It is the word used of Legion by the evangelists when he is healed by the Lord (Mark 5:15, Luke 8:35) — he is restored by salvation to 'his right mind'. All round moral consistency is what the Apostle looks for in a potential elder. The use of the separate but related adjectives in Titus 1:8 *dikaioi* and *hosios* make this

clear. The first speaks of a man's conduct — judged by the law, it is not deficient. The second of his character, he displays the gracious fruits of the Spirit.

2. *His relationships*: What is chiefly significant here is again the strong contrast with the standards of the world in its assessment of those who should lead. 'Gentleness' (1 Tim. 3:3) is not a worldly virtue. In the world self-assertiveness and a 'strong personality' are cultivated and ever commended. By contrast, the man who would be an elder in God's Church is not to try to 'get his way by force of personality'. Affection not fear is what he is to inspire in those he leads. The humility that marks the Chief Shepherd who came not 'to be served, but to serve' (Mark 10:45) is to mark his under shepherds. Surely this is an area where our thinking needs to be reformed. We want manliness among our elders, but that is not the same as machismo (a strong sense of masculine pride or exaggerated masculinity). We want to respect those who are among us as leaders but that is not to open the door to evangelical personality cults.

3. *His home*: At once we come up against the Apostle's difficult comment about the elder's married status. Here I find myself in disagreement with Keith Davies in his otherwise very helpful article in *R. Today* no. 60¹ Pastor Davies seems to read the Pauline statement 'the husband of but one wife' (identical in 1 Tim. 3:2 and Titus 1:6) as excluding the unmarried man from all church office. Paul repeats the same stipulation in the qualifications for deacons (1 Tim. 3:12). As one who continues in the un-married state and has had pastoral office, I may be accused of special pleading here. But I would suggest that here the Apostle is simply discussing the regularity of an elder's marriage (does he have more than one wife?) rather than whether he is married or not. Of course, with polygamy unlawful in Western countries, we have little occasion to apply this injunction ourselves. However, in a missionary situation it clearly remains of relevance — though it does *not* warrant the putting away of all wives but one before church membership is granted. If we were to grant Pastor Davies' exegesis of this injunction we would have two difficulties. First, such an exegesis would directly contradict the same Apostle's commendation of the unmarried state in 1 Corinthians (7:7, 27, 32, 35 etc.). Second, we would have to diminish the testimony of all those many servants of Christ in the history of the Church who have had neither the call to, nor opportunity of, marriage. Think of Henry Martyn, R. M. McCheyne and Charles Simeon.

What is not in dispute is the clear apostolic emphasis on the home as a microcosm of the church. 'If anyone does not know how to manage his own family how can he take care of God's Church?' (1 Tim. 3:5). Here Paul is not remarking on the status of the elder's married life (is it regular?) but on its quality (does it bring credit to the Gospel?). So we are not to accept the 'children of the manse' as an inevitable phenomenon. It is to be eschewed. When a man is appointed to pastoral office, be it from outside the fellowship ('calling a pastor') or inside ('appointing an elder') it is proper to enquire about his home life, and to seek testimony concerning his marriage. Indeed it may follow that it is not wise to appoint a man to church office in the early years of

marriage if that will deprive him of time to build good relationships with his wife and young children.²

At no time must the church put an elder in a position where he cannot adequately discharge his family responsibilities. His usefulness in office *depends* on the sustained quality of his family life.

The special call to hospitality (1 Tim. 3:2, Titus 1:8) has immediate reference here. If the elder's home-life is no credit to the gospel that will hinder the effectiveness of any ministry of hospitality. It will prevent his home from being a place of fruitful pastoral contact with the members. One can hardly have a meaningful conversation with a visiting member of the church if 'unruly' (*asotia* Titus 1:6) children are rampaging around the house!

4. *His work:* Under the heading of work we do not need to make the unbiblical distinction of separating 'Christian' from secular work. The qualities that make a man a good worker in one sphere apply equally to the other. Paul combined the work of church-planting in Corinth with that of the trade of tent-making (Acts 18:3). Indeed, it is a rare church which is able to support more than one or two of its elders on a full-time basis. A man well organized (i.e. *cosmios*, 1 Tim. 3:2) — a better translation than N.I.V.'s 'respectable' — in his secular work will not find that quality unhelpful in the work of the eldership. There are eldership decisions to be minuted, church meeting agendas to be discussed etc.

While general qualities will be appropriate to secular and church calling the requirement that the elder be 'able to teach' (*didaktikos*) clearly has reference to his ministry in the fellowship. And if this is an apostolic requirement there must clearly also be opportunity for the elder to exercise such teaching ability. Paul never separates out the work of pastor and teacher as we tend to do today. In Ephesians 4:11 it is a composite office of pastor/teacher which the Lord has supplied to the church. So we have no biblical warrant for dividing the eldership into those who teach, the pastor and his assistant perhaps, and those who pastor, the rest of the eldership. The growth of specialized counselling ministries separate from the work of preaching and teaching is a deviation from the biblical norm. Clearly the amount of public ministry an elder in full-time employment will be able to undertake may be limited. But it would be a good rule of thumb that every elder should have some part in the preaching ministry on a regular basis. Conversely, churches should not invite out of their membership to preach regularly those whom they are otherwise unwilling to endorse in the office of elder.

Finally we may add at this point that it is this dual work of the elders, their ruling over and teaching of the local assembly (1 Tim. 5:17, Acts 20:28) that precludes women from being appointed to this office. To appoint women as elders immediately infringes the complementary apostolic requirement that women should not teach or rule men (1 Tim. 2:12). To have women in the eldership and then to justify that by saying that they have only an advisory function and do not teach corrupts the whole institution of eldership. Elders *ipso facto* do rule and are teachers of the congregation of God's people.

5. *In the world:* It might seem strange that in both passages the apostle Paul has reference to the standing before outsiders of the man who is being considered for office. But this is only a specific application of the general NT teaching on the relations between church and society. We are to 'live at peace with everyone' (Rom. 12:18). Pagans seeing our good deeds give glory to God (1 Peter 2:12). One of the noteworthy features of the early believers in Acts before the onset of official persecution was the high esteem in which they were held; Luke makes mention of this several times (Acts 2:47, 5:13, 5:26). In settled times it is to be a characteristic feature of the church's standing. So it clearly follows that those who have responsibility in the churches must command respect in the wider community. They are not required to be sinless,³ but they must be of good reputation (*kalēn marturian*). They must be men of good character and public integrity. The church must be satisfied that this test is met before it appoints a man. Outsiders will in large measure judge the quality of the church by the new and existing elders public testimony.

6. *The Church:* In section 4 we have already looked at some of the requirements that are so right for the elder's work in the church. Here the apostle again focuses rather on the maturity of the man under consideration for office. We note that it was never Paul's practice immediately to appoint elders in the churches that had been brought into being by his preaching. It was on their *return* to Galatia at the end of the first missionary journey (Acts 14:23) that Paul and Barnabas appointed elders. It was to Titus *after* the initial work of evangelization in Crete that Paul gives the task of seeking out men to be elders (Titus 1:5). There is no substitute for time as the Holy Spirit builds up the elements of Christian character in a potential office-holder.

At this point we need to be wary of two related traps into which churches can fall. The first is simply to fail to give the recently converted candidate time to mature in the faith. We all know of the phenomenon of the 'converted wrestler', the convert who was a public figure before coming to faith and is thrust forward into positions of responsibility in the church before he is ready. On the other hand, the second is the danger of thinking that all elders must also be elderly, that age itself is a qualification for office. The derivation of the word often used, presbyter (older man) is not meant to suggest grey hairs or lined faces before a man is eligible for office. Timothy, who functions like Titus as a roving elder among the churches is told 'let no one despise your youth' (1 Tim. 4:12, RSV). Some churches I have been in have had men who have been *too* old and frail to carry out their tasks effectively. Appointment to the eldership is not a kind of Christian long-service medal for aged pilgrims.

Why do the qualifications matter?

Why all this apostolic stress on the qualifications for the elders and that almost to the exclusion of discussion of their tasks and roles in the church? I want to suggest four reasons:

First, godliness and usefulness are inextricably linked in God's economy. For a man to function properly as an elder he must be godly. What is true of the

eldership is true of the church as a whole. Her purity subserves her mission. Her good deeds cause men to glorify God (Mt. 5:16, 1 Pet. 2:12). The church is called to holiness in God's purposes and so those who lead her must exemplify that holiness. Paul is not afraid to appeal both to his life as well as to his teaching in his charge to the elders of Ephesus (Acts 20:33-35). Supremely we have this truth demonstrated in the life of the Lord Jesus himself, whose separation from sin is the indispensable qualification for his office as Saviour of his people (1 Pet. 2:21-24, 2 Cor. 5:21). McCheyne's comment 'A holy minister (elder) is an awful weapon in the hand of God' is as applicable as ever.

Second, attention to the qualifications is essential because this is an area where the enemy will exploit any carelessness by the church. The 'devil's trap' (1 Tim. 3:7) is to cause the elders to neglect the nurture and development of these qualities. If Satan is able to lull the church into complacency about the qualities of the men appointed then he can undermine the whole work and witness. The setting of the Pastorals is of the church under pressure from false teachers without and carelessness of living within. The task of the elders is to maintain the church in all 'that conforms to the glorious Gospel of the blessed God' (1 Tim. 1:11).

Third, the office of the elder is one of great honour and dignity. 'If any one sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task' (1 Tim. 3:1). The elders who direct well are worthy of 'double honour' (1 Tim. 5:17). They—those 'over you in the Lord' (1 Thes. 5:12) are to be greatly respected. Peter dignifies the office by naming himself as a 'fellow-elder' and speaking of the elder as an under-shepherd of Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 5:1, 2). If such a dignity and respect belongs to the office, ought we not to be careful about who we call to such a task. Many churches rightly take great care as to whom they select as full-time pastor over the church. Do we show equal care in selecting our elders?

Fourth, and lastly, we remind ourselves of what the church is, of her privileges and her glory. She is the 'Household of God, the pillar and ground of the truth' (1 Tim. 3:15). She is the 'Bride of Christ', recipient of gifts as from her ascended head (Eph. 4:8, 5:25). She is the earthly manifestation of the heavenly Jerusalem, who with Christ will one day judge the world (Heb. 12:22, 1 Cor. 6:2, Mt. 18:18). To be called and set apart to rule over *this* body as an elder is the highest calling on earth to which any man can aspire. In secular affairs we take great care in the appointment of men to high office. We demand high competence and we reward them generously. How much more careful are we to be in the affairs of God's new creation brought into being by water and the word, purchased by the death of his Son (Acts. 20:28, Titus 3:5).

¹ 'Reformation for Elders and Deacons' March/April 1980, p. 7.

² Even if I cannot follow Keith Davies' comments on the elders and singleness, I find his arguments on the elders' children persuasive and helpful (*RT no. 63* p. 3 ff).

³ See Keith Davies no. 60 — p. 7, for helpful discussion.

Book Reviews

Know the Truth. A handbook of Christian belief. Bruce Milne. I.V.P. 288pp. Paperback £3.95.

This handbook comes from a Scottish Baptist who is a tutor in Biblical and Historical Theology at Spurgeons College, London. As the sub-title suggests, it is important since it will be used very widely by students and ministers. This book is likely to replace T. C. Hammond's *In Understanding be Men*, being an up to date model of that work. The whole spectrum of Christian doctrine is covered in seven parts — 1. Authority, 2. God, 3. Man, 4. Christ, 5. The Holy Spirit, 6. The Church, 7. The last things. Each of these concludes with a couple of pages of practical applications (three cheers!) — and each is further broken down so that in the end there are 30 chapters. Each of the 30 concludes with a shortlist of most relevant Scripture references, a series of questions and then a bibliography. The idea of questions is really good. By these you can test whether you have a slothful or well-disciplined and retentive reader. The first of all the applicatory headings could hardly be more appropriate. It reads, 'The need to be born again!'

Part 1 Scripture. The subject is admirably covered. One of the questions reads: 'Identify the main hermeneutical principles. Illustrate their significance with examples of errors which arise from their neglect' (p. 48).

Part 2 God. Helpfully the reality of Tri-unity is well outlined before proceeding to God's attributes where Milne commences with two excellent statements: Bavinck: 'God's attributes coincide with his being' and Calvin: 'God to keep us sober speaks sparingly of his essence.' We would note from the latter that over-detailed distinctions with regard to God's incommunicable attributes are not helpful. Milne proceeds under four major headings: the Glory, Lordship, Holiness and Love of God.

He sees the glory of God as synonymous with transcendence which concept goes beyond all finite reality. The consuming fire at Mount Sinai and Ezekiel's vision of the mighty wheels reflect this 'going beyond all finite reality'.

Transcendent attributes commented upon by the author are infinity (1 Tim. 6:16), self-existence and immutability.

Whereas some take the title Yahweh to signify transcendence Milne takes this in the context of the burning bush to signify God's faithfulness to keep his covenant. Lordship he expounds under three related perfections: omnipotence (Gen. 17:1), omnipresence (Ps. 139:7-12) and omniscience (all-knowingness).

Concerning God's holiness he suggests that this not only means a negative: that is total purity excluding anything to do with sin, but a positive: 'his very being is the outshining and outpouring of purity, truth, righteousness, justice, goodness and every moral perfection'. The 'Holy One of Israel' (Is. 5:19, 30:12, 43:3, 55:5) requires not only abstinence from evil but positive conformity to righteousness in all our living (Is. 58).

Related terms should be noted in connection with God's holiness, namely, *righteousness, justice and wrath*.

Milne's overall perspective in 8 pages is balanced and helpful. The advantage of brevity helps the Christian to retain a worthy concept as a whole of the divine perfections. However the difficulty with such compression is inadequacy. For instance, in the one paragraph on wrath the author does not begin to grapple with the nature and reality of this attribute which is strongly emphasised throughout Scripture. Likewise in one page devoted to the love of God in which Milne incorporates the goodness (kindness), mercy, covenant or steadfast love, the exposition is too brief and fails to get down to such essentials as the distinctions between benevolent and complacent love.

Part 3 Man. In dealing with the origins of man the author merely discusses issues which open the door wide to evolution. He is very weak on Genesis 1-3 and fails to bring the whole testimony of Scripture (Rom. 5:12) to bear upon the subject. A transposition of page 105 to precede the discussion on page 95 would have been helpful.

This section on man is the weakest part of the book. A great opportunity is lost to challenge the compromised thinking of the majority of evangelicals on the question of creation and evolution. University students particularly are confused on this subject.

Part 4 The person and work of Christ. It would have been better for the author to discuss the implications of the incarnation and the employment or otherwise of Christ's divine attributes, prior to grappling with matters such as Christ's apparent limited knowledge. A most stimulating outline on historical theology on the person of Christ (p. 141 ff) is briefly and lucidly presented. Full marks here. Similar resort to historical theology on the doctrine of man would have done wonders for the previous section. (T. C. Hammond during an epoch almost devoid of Calvinism surprisingly does employ historical theology for the doctrine of man in *In Understanding be Men*, p. 90 ff.) Milne chooses not to deal with particular redemption or the extent of the atonement.

Part 5 The person and work of the Holy Spirit. The bibliographies throughout the book are balanced and helpful. Every preacher will have his preferences and I would prefer to find that the doctrine of election and calling is treated here and not in Part 2. This is because the author aims at an *ordo salutis* under the direction of God the Holy Spirit: election, calling, regeneration, repentance, faith. All these are helpfully explained. Sanctification is opened up along the lines: once-and-for-all and progressive; crisis or process? rest or struggle? complete or partial? The page devoted to the Charismatic Movement raises more questions than it answers. A positive suggestion is to use that space to describe the necessary qualifications of a genuine Holy Spirit Revival. Milne just begins to touch on that when he claims that for a revival to qualify as such the whole of a society needs to be affected.

Part 6 The Church. A superb note is struck at the outset in taking up the theme of the corporateness of the church. This aspect is reflected more or less in the various images or analogies used for the church in Scripture: the people, the body, the bride, building, kingdom, flock and vineyard, all of which are explained. In expounding the marks of the church attention is drawn to the missing mark of mission.

It would be preferable if the brief section on worship (so brief as to be of little help) was brought forward and joined to the section on Church Growth. Here he claims that 'the Church cannot live above the level of its expository preaching', a golden assertion which deserves an amen loud enough for the universal evangelical body to hear. Milne then warns well

against the dangers that are mixed with the blessings of private Bible study. By now the reader of this volume has come to recognise two main gears used by the author, the gear of firm dogmatic Biblical instruction and the slow cautious 'stop-go-forward-back' gear of discussion of various views. This could be called the 'take your choice gear' which is the one he uses on the creation-evolution subject and which he employs in this section for baptism. However, he so drives here that the bumps involved in going over infant-baptisms are really bumpy! — but only wee bumps for the baptist passengers!

Part 7 The last things. As we would expect there is no change of gear for this section. Here not two but three camps must be satisfied. The facts are well presented. Milne repeats most of the main points which he has written in his book, *The End of the World* (Kingsway, 159pp, £2.50). Dispensationalism is omitted and the reason for that would be found on page 89 ff of *The End of the World*. There is so much that is unbiblical about dispensationalism that it does not even qualify to run for consideration in the book we are reviewing! (American friends note well!).

Conclusions. It is an enormous undertaking to try and compress the whole corpus of Christian doctrine into 284 pages. Yet there are advantages in giving a systematic theology which is so compact to those who would be put off by large works like Strong, Hodge or Shedd.

This book will render a valuable service.

God's Words. Studies of key Bible themes. J. I. Packer. I.V.P. 215pp. £1.95 (lowest quality paper — paperback edition).

The most favourable commendation that the reviewer can give of this book is to say that he prefers it to the celebrated work by the same author, namely, *Knowing God* (256pp. Hodder). The reason: all-round usefulness. 94 pages of *Knowing God* is devoted to the attributes of God but the treatment of the theme is limited and does not gain momentum.

In the work under review now there is no problem with regard to a theme or golden thread. We are presented with 17 different subjects. These first appeared as separate articles in the magazine *Inter Varsity* (now defunct). These articles have been enlarged, improved and polished to become vintage

The church cannot live above the level of its expository preaching.

Bruce Milne in *Know the Truth*, page 229.

Packer. As his name suggests rich material packed tightly. Contributions include, Revelation, Scripture, the Lord, the world, sin, the Devil, grace, the mediator, reconciliation, faith justification, regeneration, election, holiness and sanctification, mortification, fellowship and death. The sharpness of his definition is seen in his statement on the nature of sin: 'the mind of the flesh (the mind and heart of the unregenerate sinner) is *enmity against God*' — disaffection to his rule, resentment of his claims, and hostility to his word, all expressed in a fixed and unalterable determination to pursue one's own independence in defiance of the Creator! (p. 73).

The chapters titled The World, Sin and The Devil are particularly outstanding. Typical is the following description of Satan:

Satan's mentality (p. 87)

The mentality of Satan is a mystery whose depths we can never fully plumb: not just because Satan is an angel, while we are men, but also because Satan is purely evil, and we cannot conceive what pure evil is like. No man is so far gone in sin that no vestige of goodness or truth remains in him; no man is wholly motivated by hatred of others; no man has literally no aim in life save to wreck and destroy the creative achievements of another; no man ever says to himself in literally every situation and every sphere of value, 'evil, be thou my good'; no man's character is integrated solely by the power of hate towards God. Though in fallen man God's image is spoiled at every point, so that nothing man does is ever entirely right and as it should be, none of us is purely evil, and we simply cannot imagine a being who is purely evil. We can never, therefore, form a really adequate idea of what Satan is like. Not even Milton could imagine Satan as entirely lacking in nobility; nor is C. S. Lewis's Screwtape entirely without good humour. But Scripture clearly means us to believe in a Satan, and a host of Satanic myrmidons, who are of quite unimaginable badness — more cruel, more malicious, more proud, more scornful, more perverted, more destructive, more disgusting, more filthy, more despicable, than anything our minds can conceive.

The exposition of Grace does not fulfil its promise. J.I.P. declares that this one word

contains within itself the whole of N.T. theology and it is the key that unlocks the N.T. and is the only key that does. While this 14 page exposition is better than that on the same subject in *Knowing God* (8 pages which include 2 of quoting hymns!) it still does not soar into skies or send tingles down our spines like Abraham Booth's *Reign of Grace*. The chapter on mortification is great stuff but a little more of John Owen (who has never been outclassed by anyone on that theme) would have made it better. There are only 7 pages on regeneration. The creative nature of that work is powerfully established. The section on death (14 pages) like most of this book is in the Gold Medal class.

While the paperback production is cheap it has the advantage of fitting into a side pocket easily and you will be able to buy plenty of copies for friends.

Christians in the Third World. David Edgington. Paternoster. 142pp. £4.00 large size paperback.

The author succeeds in providing a clear, helpful and sympathetic description of conditions in the Third World. In addition he briefly discusses the increasing complexities of multi-culturalism in Britain. There are about two million people of other nations living here now. He does his work well and presents the facts in a challenging way with moving illustrations of need. For example:

Little Marli, a six-year-old girl from Rio de Janeiro, looked normal in every way. Healthy. Happy. There was just one thing wrong with her. She couldn't learn. At first teachers thought perhaps her difficulty was psychological, the result of neglect in a family of eleven children. Her younger sister had the same problem. But after careful observation and testing, it was evident that Marli, a child of Brazil's poor and wretched favelas (slums), was unable to learn because as an infant her malnourished body could not produce a healthy brain.

The facts of decline in English evangelicalism (p. 9) and, in much greater detail, of the 71 U.K. based missionary societies (p. 60 ff.) is useful. The author's portrayal of the basic reasons for the economic dilemma of the third world is

fairly stated. If readers are not informed about the facts generally then that in itself will be a good reason to buy the book.

Omissions are inevitable if an author sets out to cover so wide a field. For instance his discussion of Liberation Theology misses the major point of violence (p. 97) which David Kingdon does face head-on in his booklet *The Gospel of Violence* (though here it may be argued that David gives the impression that all Liberation Theologians are violent when in fact there are many non-violent advocates).

Question marks could be placed down the margins of pages 85 ff, where the description of growth is far too glowing. Reports from those living in these situations reveal great super-

ficiality and much nominal Christianity.

The writing style and proof reading could be improved in several places.

| Gross National Product Per Person Income for 1978 | | |
|--|--------------------|----------------------|
| Country | GNP £M sterling | Per Capita Income |
| Ethiopia | 1,435 | 55 |
| Bangladesh | 3,640 | 45 |
| Nepal | 790 | 60 |
| Nigeria | 24,050 | 300 |
| Sri Lanka | 1,435 | 100 |
| Tanzania | 2,065 | 120 |
| Zaire | 3,240 | 120 |
| U.K. | 159,740 | 2,860 |
| Switzerland | 40,965 | 6,490 |

THE WESTMINSTER CONFERENCE *(continued from page 9)*

of mentioning this is that Tom Nettles is due to study at Regent's Park College in Oxford during 1984-85. He will be focussing on 17th and 18th century Baptist history in England. We are in urgent need of more books like the one by Nettles that has just had a mini-review on page 9. It is hoped that drawing attention to this grossly neglected area of Baptist history, 1800-1850, might result in some research being done by those who are endowed with concern for the value of our history.

The overall impression was that the Westminster Conference is alive and well, especially so in uninhibited discussion. There needs to be more humanity about the conference. It is too often assumed that everyone knows who the speakers are and where they come from. More can be done to introduce contributors who give valuable contributions during the discussion time. For instance, a young Chinese man spoke up well but nobody

seemed to know whether he came from Hong Kong, Malaysia or any other place, and he disappeared as mysteriously as he came! Another man of generous physical proportions contributed in the discussion time. He spoke so softly that the chairman requested more decible power from him after which there flowed a fountain of wisdom and knowledge. We are still oblivious as to his background or origin. It may be a good thing to have everybody labelled with badges which is the usual helpful custom at conferences.

The catering for lunch was by professional caterers. Their expertise and success was quite evident by the proportion of sleepers in the afternoon sessions!

As has been said in these columns before, this conference is probably unique in the world. It certainly is a most valuable source of history, biography and doctrine. For this we are very grateful. ☐☐☐

THE WONDERFUL NAMES OF OUR GOD *(continued from page 6)*

JEHOVAH-TSEBAHOTH, Jehovah of hosts (1 Sam. 1:3; Rom. 9:29; Jas. 5:4).

He is JEHOVAH-HOSEENU, that is, the LORD our maker, is also JEHOVAH-M'KADDESH, the LORD who sanctifies us (Ex. 31:13; Lev. 20:8).

In conclusion we say let us ascribe all glory and praise for JEHOVAH-HELEYON, Jehovah most high (Ps. 7:17; 47:2; 97:9). ☐☐☐

Valuable Lessons from the Montanist Movement

by Gwynne Lloyd Williams

The history of the Montanist sect makes fascinating reading. The light which it sheds on current trends and developments is remarkable. Information about the group is not over abundant in that most sources are secondary and considerably later than the Montanists themselves. By a careful compilation and comparison of data it is possible to arrive at a fairly detailed understanding of the basic tenets of Montanism. In order to place the sect in its historical context it is vital to consider briefly the major developments within Second Century Christendom. It will then be possible to outline the story of the Montanists and attempt to glean some lessons from their history.

The Second Century Church

Montanism flourished during the second half of the Second Century. This was a difficult transitional period for the Church because the Apostles had died and with them had gone those extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit which marked their age. Instead of relying on these unique men and their accompanying signs, the Church had to learn to live by the rule of Scripture. The difficulty of this adaptation cannot be exaggerated and it is hardly surprising to find that many Christians were tempted to abandon all sanity in order to pursue various extreme beliefs and practices.

Gnosticism was a particularly pervasive influence at this time and one which was so divergent as to be difficult to identify, let alone attack. It robbed many churches of all their vitality by stressing the impossibility of salvation without the possession of certain secret information. The inevitable result of all this was to make Christianity into just one of the many Mystery Cults which flourished at that time. There were also many independent and highly individual false prophets who led the gullible down diverse but equally unprofitable cul de sacs.

The response of the Church at large was to grow colder and more institutionalised by the hour. The gifts of the ministry were elevated and stressed to the detriment of the gifts of ordinary church members who were regarded as little more than inactive passengers. Expectation of the second coming of Christ was dying out in the church with the result that there was no longer an impetus for holy living. The people of God were selling their birthright. Sadly much of this was to remain lost until reclaimed during the Reformation over a millennium later.

The characteristics of the Montanist movement

Montanism was largely a protest movement against the whole atmosphere which pervaded the Second Century Church. The sect first flourished in

Phrygia in Asia Minor but it rapidly became an influence on the Church at large. The original leader was Montanus who was joined by two prophetesses, Prisca and Maximilla in a collective leadership. It is paradoxical that these three carried great authority within Montanism, yet no biography is known to have been produced by their loyal followers.

All three leaders claimed to be the mouthpieces of the Paraclete, the Greek term which they used to denote the Holy Spirit. When they were prophesying, they used the first person singular which makes some of their pronouncements reminiscent of Old Testament prophecies. It would be wrong to give the impression that all their proclamations were easily intelligible however for many were incoherent ravings which were never understood by the hearers.

On the question of the status and authority of these prophecies, the Montanists were forthright. They consistently and unwaveringly claimed Divine authority for all their prophetic utterances. To disobey or disagree with any prophecy was to reject the very Word of God.

Ecstasy was a major feature of Montanist worship. They had no patience for any form of ecclesiastical organisation, preferring to enjoy total freedom. Such an emphasis on individual liberty inevitably produced chaotic meetings at which disorder and bad behaviour flourished. It is also evident that the sect soon developed a leadership hierarchy of its own and was indeed the first Christian group known to have paid its leaders. They soon learned that leadership of some sort is essential in order to avoid total and utter anarchy.

It is a demonstrable fact that unrestrained emotional activity has often gone hand in hand with wild eschatological speculation in the history of the church. This was highlighted by the Montanists who had even worked out that the New Jerusalem would be located at Pepuza and Tymion, two Phrygian villages. They expected an imminent end to the world, foreshadowed by wars and great suffering. Indeed they believed that the time left was insufficient to allow the organizing of a proper Montanist Church. As has been the case with myriad other sects, the Montanists outlived their own eschatological predictions. This was obviously a major factor in the later demise of the group.

Montanists held a very rigid morality which they regarded as surpassing that of Christ himself. They had a list of those sins which were irremissible and gave no hope for the forgiveness of a serious post-baptismal sin. They regarded sexuality with great suspicion and held that the married state was inferior to that of the celibate. Self preservation dictated that marriage could not be totally forbidden however! This legalistic and formal approach to morality and ethics is typical of so many fringe groups who lose their grip on the balanced teaching of the Bible.

There is no doubt that the Montanists did have other healthier emphases, notably their stress on the crucial importance of a personal, saving knowledge of God. They denied that any institution could bestow salvation and also rejected the possibility of Salvation by good works. Once an individual was saved

Once the finality of Scripture is denied, the door is open to all manner of excess, which eventually kills. Church history teaches quite plainly that when the people of God face difficulty, the only way to triumph is to continue obeying and proclaiming the whole counsel of God.

however he was expected to adopt an ascetic life style. Many fasts were kept and when food was taken it was normally eaten dry, it seems that large numbers of the sect were vegetarians but that this was not compulsory. The members were urged to face persecution bravely, there are many records of Montanists dying in a noble and heroic manner amid the most gruesome circumstances.

Their doctrine of the Godhead appears to have been deficient in one area only. Montanist writings drive a wedge between the Holy Spirit of Bible times and the person whom they termed the Paraclete who was active in their day. This was based on a spectacular misinterpretation of the promise made by Christ in John 14:16, that he would send the 'comforter' which is a translation of the Greek word 'paraclete'. They held that Jesus was promising the presence of a separate entity from the persons of the Trinity.

Montanism was in its day a very attractive sect for many different reasons. Most obvious was the marked difference between their high moral standards and the decadence of Roman life. Their emphasis on the need for a personal experience of God has a timeless appeal. It is not surprising to learn that they attracted many converts, the most prestigious of whom was Tertullian of Carthage. Sadly other aspects of their doctrine and practice must be regarded as unbiblical and therefore unacceptable.

Clearly the emphasis on ecstatic worship, speaking in tongues and prophecy was unhealthy and in discord with Biblical teaching. The church of the Second Century did not think highly of the Montanists, indeed several local assemblies believed that Montanus was possessed and at least one attempt was made at exorcism. A probable reason for this is that just as in the Old Testament, ecstatic worship was a characteristic of Pagan shrines and not expected of God worshippers.

A second factor which helps to account for the suspicion with which the church viewed Montanism was the reputation of various leaders of the sect. Prisca and Maximilla had left their respective husbands and their moral standing was questionable to say the least. Another leader was condemned by the civil authorities as a common thief. These deficiencies were unlikely to endear the sect to level headed Church leaders.

Learning from Montanism

(a) The distinguishing characteristic of Montanism was its insistence that God was still giving new revelations to man, through prophecy and ecstatic speech. They also claimed that these oracles shared the status and the authority of Scripture. This teaching is logically consistent, for if God is speaking to us through prophecy then that word from God must share the same attributes as his self-revelation in Scripture.

At the same time it is clear that to hold this view deliberately, or indeed to subscribe to it in practice is to make a nonsense of the closed canon. What this sect did was to promote subjective experiences to the same status as the more sure word of Scripture. This opened the door to many problems and difficulties, especially that of discerning which prophecies were truly of God and which were of other origin. However this practice had an even more devastating effect for it thrust people back into a horrible dark age of uncertainty and confusion. John Murray has summarized this whole position: 'We are deceiving ourselves and refusing to face reality if we think that we can maintain even the most attenuated Christian belief or hope without presupposing and acknowledging that absolute uniqueness belonging to Scripture as a collection of written documents' (Works vol. I, p. 11). Once the finality of the Biblical revelation is denied, all truth becomes relative. Then we are cast back on ourselves rather than on Almighty God as a final authority.

That situation is too horrible to be faced. This may well explain why the present day Montanists prefer to hedge the entire issue. It is virtually impossible to uncover a contemporary treatment of the status of supposed new revelations from the pen of someone who is otherwise of Reformed persuasion. Yet this is a crucial area if one holds or is tempted to hold a neo-Montanist stance. The statement that the Bible is the eternal word of God, while prophecy is a transient word to meet a specific need, is the only solution proffered. This leads us into further danger however. It suggests that God is unable to speak to the individual through Scripture without further, additional revelation. If we have to depend on the voice of a present day prophet there will always be doubt as to his authenticity and what he says. In contrast to that there is absolute finality in the authority of Scripture as the Holy Spirit applies the Word to us.

Clearly this is an area where those who might term themselves 'Reformed Charismatics' need to do some very hard thinking. In reality the problem is beyond satisfactory conclusion because it is our lot to live in obedience to the Bible rather than to expect constant streams of new revelations. This may well not appeal to the natural man, but what is there more exciting and gripping than the very Word of the Living God?

(b) Montanism originated as a spontaneous reaction to the condition of the Second Century church. It was not long before the protesters developed into a structured sect in open rivalry with the church. This tragedy of new groups poaching Christians from local churches has been reenacted all too often during this Century.

The sect even had a star convert in Tertullian who was a figure of some considerable stature. In a similar way modern Charismatics have attracted the allegiance or sympathy of leaders of some repute. Yet the presence of this great man and of large numbers of converts could not prevent Montanism from being just another pathway to nowhere. It was not long before the sect became just one more irrelevant, eccentric religious grouping, which ignored an unsaved world.

(continued on inside back cover)

Studies in Biblical Theology

The Character and Task of Biblical Theology

This is the first in a series of articles by Don Garlington. The importance of this subject can hardly be overstressed as our readers will themselves appreciate as they get to grips with the issues embraced. The author is pastoring at Langley Park, near Durham. He is an American who is continuing his studies at the University of Durham.

The genius of biblical theology has been articulated by the ‘father’ of the modern Reformed movement in this discipline. ‘Biblical theology is that branch of exegetical theology which deals with the process of the self-revelation of God deposited in the Bible.’¹ In another place, Vos informs us that ‘Biblical theology, rightly defined, is nothing else than the exhibition of the organic process of supernatural revelation in its historic continuity and multiformity’.²

In these definitions the emphasis falls on three essential factors. The first is *God*. Apart from the reality of the ‘self-revelation of *God* as deposited in the Bible’, the notion of a *biblical* theology becomes altogether an exercise in futility, and the very phrase ‘biblical theology’ is turned into a contradiction of terms. As with every other department of theological science, biblical theology must in the final analysis eventuate in the adoration of the Triune God in his self-disclosure.

The second and third elements of biblical theology, as defined above, belong together: *process* and *progress*. The former term teaches us that both the character and task of biblical theology is that of tracing the great themes of redemptive history according to their *historical order* of unfolding. The latter term instructs us that the focal point of biblical theology is not only the historical unfolding of God’s self-revelation, but as well the expansion and upward movement of that revelation. It is because this discipline deals with both the process and progress of revelation that Vos suggests that a more appropriate designation for it would be ‘history of redemption’ or ‘history of special revelation’. Be that as it may, the science of biblical theology recognizes that special revelation did not come from God in one mass and at one time.³ As we say, ‘the Bible did not fall out of heaven’. Again to quote Vos, ‘Biblical theology deals with revelation as divine activity. . . .’ And this divine activity ‘has not completed itself in one exhaustive act, but unfolded itself in a long series of successive acts’.⁴

The effect of these three major elements of the study of biblical theology is that the student of Scripture must reckon with a revelation which is both unified and diversified; as it were, a unity in diversity and a diversity in unity. It is, now, precisely this view of the divine self-disclosure which is expressly set forth in Heb. 1:1-2. For the present purposes it will be sufficient to focus in on the two adverbs which commence the entire epistle. The writer tells us that God did not say everything at once, but spoke *polumērōs* and *polutropōs*.

These two adverbial expressions serve to define and qualify the character of Old Testament revelation. According to the writer, God addressed himself to the fathers in the prophets ‘in many parts’ (*polumerōs*) and ‘in many ways’ (*polutropōs*). These two terms are not identical. As Grosheide explains, they are to be distinguished in terms of quantity as opposed to quality.⁵ The former word is essentially a time reference and points us to the various epochs (quantitatively considered) of the Old Testament speaking of God. J. Hering cites the 5th century author Severien, who says that *polumerōs* is equivalent to ‘the distinction of the times’ (*tēn diaphoran tōn kairōn*).⁶ The latter adverb refers to the variety of modes (qualitatively considered) which were employed during the separate eras of that revelation before Christ.

This revelation to the fathers which was both *polumerōs* and *polutropōs* bore the character of a self-disclosure of God that was divided into several epochs, each containing a multiplicity of ‘ways’ in which the Lord was pleased to unveil himself to his chosen people. The emphasis in all of this falls upon *diversity* and *complexity*. The precise content of the disclosure to the fathers was varied according to the needs and the capacities of those who received it. Moreover, this diversity and complexity were intensified by the different ways in which God spoke to the prophets themselves (e.g., dreams, visions, direct speech). In addition, when we consult any one of these epochs with their diverse modes of communication, it becomes clear that each period conveyed only a fragment of the whole truth. For example, in the period of the writing prophets there tends to be a dominant emphasis which preponderates the entirety of a given prophecy. In Isaiah the new creation and new exodus occupy the forefront of the latter part of the book. Amos heralds God’s concern for social justice within the covenant. Hosea emphasizes the covenant love and faithfulness of God. The examples could be multiplied, but as Bengel tersely remarks: ‘The very multitude of the prophets indicates that they prophesied in part.’⁷

From one point of view, this multiplicity and diversity of the pre-Christian revelation was an indication of the *richness* of God’s speaking. C. Spicq⁸ points us to Ephesians 3:10, where Paul speaks of the ‘manifold wisdom of God’. The term translated ‘manifold’ (*polupoikilos*) denotes a divine wisdom which is ‘many coloured’. As such, God’s method of speaking to the fathers is invested with a complexion of endless fascination to the student of the Old Testament Scriptures. No wonder the Psalmist could pray: ‘Open my eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.’

Yet from another point of view – and this is the one especially singled out by the author of Hebrews – the very multiplicity of the divine speaking was a sign of its relative imperfection. As Westcott remarks: ‘That which is communicated in parts, sections, fragments, must of necessity be imperfect; and so also a representation which is made in many modes cannot be other than provisional. The supreme element of unity is wanting in each case.’⁹ The variety and *therefore* the imperfection of the pre-Christian revelation is the lesson which the writer deduces from the history of God’s speaking. This is not to say that he

despises the richness of the former word from God. But it is to say that he agrees with Paul that in Christ reside all of the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Therefore, the richness and complexity of God's speaking which had been spread out through the many modes and periods of the Old Testament revelation have now been concentrated in Christ.

The original point in this consideration of the language of the Epistle to the Hebrews was to demonstrate that biblical theology deals with a communication from God which is both unified and diversified. The element of diversity is not only implied, but expressly stated in the two adverbs of Hebrews 1:1. However, it is important to stress that the revelation in question was not only diversified, it was also progressive and cumulative. Any cursory reading of the Old Testament compels one to the conclusion that God chose to impart the knowledge of himself from rudimentary to more advanced stages, and that each successive portion of the Hebrew Scriptures builds upon and refers back to earlier phases of the revelation. To be sure, Christless eyes see only the 'evolution' of Israel's religion from a lower to a higher plane of development. But anyone who takes seriously the teaching of Luke 24:44 understands that from the beginning God's speaking centred in the person and work of his Son. The former communication was wonderfully rich in both its denotations and connotations, but the richness of the divine speaking reached its zenith only with the appearance of the incarnate Son of God 'at the end of these days'.

This last consideration brings us to speak of the factor of unity of continuity in the study of biblical theology. The writer of Hebrews is just as concerned about the factor of continuity as he is about the element of diversity in the speaking of God. This is evident from the way in which he makes 'God' the subject of both the participle and the finite verb in 1:1-2a. In other words, it is *God* who spoke to the fathers, and it is *God* who has now spoken in his Son. In effect, God is the organizing focus of vs. 1-2a. The emphasis falls on the sameness of origin of both the old and the new revelations. Both in the remote past and in the more recent past it is *God* who has spoken. For the writer, the strongest line of continuity between the two ages (covenants) is the speech of God. As Westcott again relates: 'The unity of the revealer is the pledge and ground of the unity of the revelation.'¹⁰ It is, then, because the same God speaks that there is *consistency* which pervades the whole of Scripture and thus renders possible such a science as biblical theology. In the final analysis, the ultimate factor in the unity of the two Testaments is the speaking of God. Seen in this light, the quest of modern biblical criticism is seen to be all the more ironic and futile. The very endeavour to construct a so-called 'biblical' theology which disallows this element of consistency becomes by the nature of the case a self-defeating proposition. In these days of such clamouring for diversity in biblical theology, the all-important unity of the Bible has to be repeatedly emphasized by those who hold to its divine origin in the speech of God.

Along these lines, it is essential to point out that even though there is an 'eschatological divide' in the process of God's speaking, the process itself is at

heart one. To be sure, there is a difference in the methodology of revelation both before and after the watershed of 'these days' at the end of which God has communicated in his Son. Nevertheless, 'It is the speaking of God itself,' as Graham Hughes explains, 'which contains the real continuity and which allows the historical (or empirical) forms which it takes to itself to be recognizably moments in an ongoing process'.¹¹ Furthermore, 'There is certainly a conception of a longitudinal "revelation history", in which earlier and more fragmentary forms of God's Address have been overtaken and replaced by a *perfected form of the same thing*'.¹² But at the risk of overstressing the point, the speech of God can never be abstracted from the Son of God. To be sure, God has spoken, but he has spoken *in his Son*. Perfectly in accord with Luke 24:44, the author of Hebrews views Christ as the apex of all of the Scriptures. 'The process *has* reached its end term and has therefore achieved perfection because the Word in the Son is the eschatological form of what God has to say.'¹³ Otto Michel can say in this regard: 'The revelation in the Son contains in itself the entirety of the divine richness conclusively and perfectly. Beyond the Son there is no more revelation in this world; in the Son is summarized the complete revelation.'¹⁴

By way of summary, we have seen in this first article that biblical theology concerns itself with the historical progress and development of the self-disclosure of God in the Bible. This particular theological discipline seeks to organize the biblical revelation thematically along the lines of *the Scripture's own methodology of organization*, i.e., *the time-line of redemptive history*. Conceived in these terms, biblical theology will make full allowance for the factors of continuity and discontinuity, taking both into account in the determination of biblical doctrines and the resolution of biblical issues. The great presupposition of the entire endeavour is the Triune God in self-revelation, whose speaking it is which forms the subject matter of biblical theology.

In a second article on the character and task of biblical theology we will compare biblical theology with systematic theology and attempt to specify more precisely the work of the biblical theologian.

Notes

¹ G. Vos, *Biblical Theology*, p. 5.

² 'The Idea of Biblical Theology as a Science and as a Theological Discipline,' in *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation. The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos*, p. 15.

³ J. Murray, 'Systematic Theology Article,' in *The New Testament Student and Theology*, p. 27.

⁴ *Biblical Theology*, p. 5. Cf. Murray, 'Systematic Theology,' p. 19.

⁵ *Opmerkingen over Hebr 1:1-4*, pp. 10-11.

⁶ *L'Épître aux Hébreux*, p. 19.

⁷ *Gnomon Novi Testamenti, ad loc.* Westcott

adds: 'The great drama of Israel's discipline was divided into separate acts; and in each act different modes were employed by God for bringing home to his people various aspects of truth.' *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, p. 5.

⁸ *L'Épître aux Hébreux*, II, p. 3.

⁹ *Hebrews*, p. 4.

¹⁰ *Hebrews*, p. 5.

¹¹ *Hebrews and Hermeneutics*, p. 6.

¹² Hughes, *ibid.* Emphasis mine.

¹³ Hughes, *ibid.*

¹⁴ *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, p. 93.

The final perseverance of believers

*He will keep you strong to the end, so that
you will be blameless on the day of our Lord
Jesus Christ.* 1 Cor. 1:8.

First we will use our text to explain exactly what we mean by the final perseverance of believers. Second we will reconcile those Bible passages which appear to contradict this truth. Third we will see why it is that believers will persevere to the end.

1. What is meant by the final perseverance of believers?

Our text says, He will keep you. In the context the you refers to saints, those who call on God: those who pray: those who have been made holy. The word 'believers' is being used instead of 'saints' because that word conveys the idea of energy and activity. To believe is to exercise faith. As we have seen, the word 'saint' means to be set apart. Those whom God sets apart will certainly be kept, but only through the constant employment of believing. Hence believers are sometimes called 'the faithful'.

Remember that there are many who profess to be Christians but in fact do not believe. For instance, in Lebanon there is the Christian Party, but it is a misnomer. Pastor Victor Sadequar who has been a pastor in Beirut for many years has explained to us that very few really believe. Just as you get Welsh, Scottish or Irish, so you get Lebanese who are called Christian; but that is really to distinguish them as non-Muslim. That is as far as it goes. To call the wilful gunmen-murderers of Lebanon 'Christian' is as misguided as calling our soccer hooligans 'Christian'.

When I talk of believers I mean those who make a definite, clear and decided stand for the gospel, who publicly profess faith in Christ, who practise daily the precepts of Jesus. Will they persevere to the end? We are thinking now about real believers. Our text also says that God will keep you strong. This is where we get our word 'perseverance'. To be kept going is to persevere. To be kept going strongly is to persevere well. To be kept going strongly denotes the use of energy and effort. The Christian life demands tremendous and continual effort. Remember that vigorously descriptive passage in Hebrews 12. There is the stadium full of spectators. There are the runners who are nearing the stadium to run that last gruelling mile. Their perseverance is being tested to the full. 26 mile marathons have zoomed into the public eye today. Most people are familiar with the sight of those weary competitors coming in to complete that last agonising stretch, agonising in one way, but thrilling in another as the cheers surround and spur on the weary runner.

This kind of perseverance is a necessity for the believer. Without it he is lost. Only those who endure to the end, said Christ, will be saved (Matt. 10:22 – the same word *hupomone*, perseverance, as in Heb. 12:1).

Our text also speaks of the end, strong to the end. This is how we get the word 'final': the 'final' perseverance of believers. Our text also tells of the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. That is the final day. It is to the tape that the runner must persevere. The believer must believe and be faithful to the end of his life. After that there is the final day when the trumpet shall sound. The great judgment day is final. It is described fully in Matthew 25.

2. Bible passages which seem to contradict the final perseverance of believers

Now there are two paragraphs of Scripture which seem to deny the certain perseverance of the saints. The first is Ezekiel 18:24 and the second is Hebrews 6:4-6. Here are the two *loca palmaria*, that is, sources of excellence, stating the matter plainly. Let us lay them out for scrutiny.

But if a righteous man turns from his righteousness and commits sin and does the same detestable things the wicked man does, will he live? None of the righteous things he has done will be remembered. Because of the unfaithfulness he is guilty of and because of the sins he has committed, he will die.

Ezekiel 18:24.

It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace.

Hebrews 6:4-6.

The paragraph on the left is saying that it is possible for a righteous man, even though he has engaged in a lifetime of good works — if he goes back on it he is lost! Does that actually happen? Yes! Not often, but it can, and it does happen.

The second passage from Hebrews also speaks of those who fail. They turn against Christ after being enlightened, after tasting his excellence, after sharing in the work of the Holy Spirit, after tasting the goodness of God's Word and also the powers of the coming world. After all that they fall away irrevocably.

We know there are those who spring up for a while, show joy in doing so, but then soon wither away again when difficulty or persecution comes (Matt. 13:6, 21). The reason is plain. They have no root in themselves. A deep work of change has not taken place in their hearts. They have not been born again. Note that much is described in Hebrews 6:4-6 but there is no reference to the new birth.

But there are also some who do go on for a long while, even become ministers or pastors, but then fall away completely. It is rare but it does happen. I have seen and known instances of this. There was a case of Francis Spira in the Reformation time, who went back, who lost all assurance and appeared to experience the torments of hell even before he died. Paul tells of Hymenaeus and Philetus who departed from the truth, and Demas who sent back to the world. There is the case of Judas Iscariot. The apostle Peter speaks of those who escape the corruption of the world but get entangled again, hopelessly so. The end for them is dreadful because their condemnation will be greater.

In the light of all this how can you be sure you will persevere to the end? We often experience weakness. Suddenly storms engulf our spirits. We feel sure

we will sink. How can we know we will persevere to the end?

3. Why believers persevere to finality

Look at our text. It says he will keep you strong to the end. And in the next verse it says God is faithful: in other words, he is faithful to his purpose. We know that God has determined in an immutable (unchangeable) way to save his people. Jesus said he gives his sheep eternal life. Nobody can snatch them out of the Father's hand. The Father is greater than all. Therefore it is impossible for Christ's sheep to perish. They shall never perish! That is his promise. Here is gold! It lies in God himself. The objects of God's eternal love are chosen in Christ and predestinated and adopted (Eph. 1:4-6). They are given to Christ. They are bought by Christ who prays for them. He preserves them completely by his prayers (Heb. 7:25). Moreover Christ has procured for them the gift of the person of the Holy Spirit who teaches them (1 John 2:27), seals them (Eph. 1:13, 14; 2 Cor. 1:22), and lives in them forever (John 14:15).

Related closely to this subject is the matter of assurance. How can I be sure I am a subject of God's grace? You may for various reasons doubt your conversion experience. The point is, do you believe now? You must examine yourself now (2 Cor. 13:5). We cannot digress to handle assurance. The point is whether there is a good work in you now? He who believes will never be put to shame (Rom. 10:11) because God, who has begun a good work in the believer, will without any doubt, complete that work (Phil. 1:6). The absolute certainty of God's purpose is well stated in Jeremiah 32:40:

*I will make an everlasting covenant with them:
I will never stop doing good to them, and I
will inspire them to fear me, so that they
will never turn away from me.*

Catch the vital point and hold on to it: this is God's work. He says: I will inspire them to fear me, so that they will never turn away from me. You see, we are kept by God Almighty. It is his strength that preserves our faith and obedience. God himself is our final perseverance. He, God omnipotent, keeps you strong to the end. It is by using faith which he gives us that God shields us to the end (1 Pet. 1:5). That is why it is so important to feed faith with the truth always. With strong meat athletes build up their stamina.

If our perseverance to the end depended on us it is certain that we would fail. The marvel of it is that Father, Son and Holy Spirit are totally committed to save us. Nothing whatever can frustrate their purpose (Rom. 8:26-39). We may slip, we may have our bad days, we may even do so terrible a thing as deny Christ, as Peter did; but Christ prays for us. The Holy Spirit restores us. Nothing can pluck us from our Father's hand. He will keep you strong to the end!

For details of the Carey Family Conference, 1983, please write to Andrew Symonds, 2 Mill Hall Cottages, Whitmans Green, Cuckfield, Sussex.

Robin Dowling, pastor of Salem Baptist Church, Kew, reports on this year's Carey conference.

The Carey Ministers' Conference 1983

This year's Carey Conference took place from 11th to 14th January at Swanwick, Derbyshire. Including day visitors, the approximate attendance figure was 95. The modest but adequate Hayes Centre facilities again provided a suitable venue. An ample bookstall was provided by John Eaton of Good News Trailer Missionary Fellowship and Roger Hodgkinson of Evangelical Press.

As a busy pastor I hope to benefit in various ways from such a conference. I look for stimulus in biblically developing my thinking within a practical framework. I aim to gain a fresh perspective on the particular work in which I am engaged. I desire to be sharpened and encouraged by fellowship with men of like minds (but not so like-minded as to be boring!) facing similar problems. Finally, I want to return with a fresh vision for, and commitment to, the Lord's work, both in my own area and throughout the world.

In measure, these desiderata were fulfilled by this conference (although I realise that their fulfilment in me depends to some extent on *my* commitment to their fulfilment in others at such a conference). I mention first the sessions at which Donald Macleod and John Waite spoke, which contributed the most to this. Of course, this is a purely personal perspective.

At two of the evening 'preaching' sessions, Donald Macleod gave what amounted to 'papers' on eschatology. His theme text was 1 Cor. 15:58, from which he argued that eschatology was central, not peripheral, in NT thinking. On the first occasion he dealt with 'realised eschatology'. He stressed the fact that we are living in the 'eschaton' (which hereafter became the 'in' word at the conference!). He developed various features of this, eg., the fact that we live

in the age of the Spirit, and the age of miracles (with special reference to miracles of converting grace, cf. John 14:12). All this (as he indicated) points up the tendency towards a wrong emphasis on revival in certain circles. We need to be more aware of what we have already in Christ. On the second evening, he dealt with the fact that, nevertheless, we live in the time of 'not yet'. Donald Macleod opened up to us some of the glorious things to come. Impressive features included his optimistic view of the future and his emphasis on the concreteness of the eternal state, which included a welcome rejection of the concept of a 'timeless' eternity. Both addresses were given from an acute Biblical Theological perspective and were lucid and elevating.

The need for a hermeneutic which knows when to say 'yes' and 'no' to the OT text in applying it today was helpfully addressed by John Waite in his two papers — 'The Prophets as Preachers' and 'Preaching from the Prophets'. In the first paper, he saw certain parallels between OT prophets and those now 'called' to preach, founded on the fact that the prophets' great responsibility was to bring the Word of God to men. In this connection, he drew attention to several significant factors concerning the prophets as preachers: eg. their exemplification of what they preached in their lives, their use of vivid illustration and arresting language, and their public firmness despite private conflicts (Jeremiah). The paper raised the whole issue of what is the true forum for 'preaching'. In the second paper, Principal Waite was concerned with the great themes of the prophets and how to make them relevant to our times. The need to be aware of their poetic language, with parallelism of thought

and extensive use of figures of speech, was stressed, as was, eg. the fact that they preached to the covenant people of God, and that their predictions of the future were borrowed from contemporary language. More such papers are needed!

There is only space to briefly mention the other sessions. The conference began with Neil Richards on the theme 'Lessons from Matthew Henry', which he presented in a way that was suitable for the travel weary. He gave an account of Matthew Henry's life and labours, and underlined such factors as his life of private communion with God. In his paper, 'Sola Scriptura?', Bob Sheehan gave a useful historical survey of the sources of authority for doctrine, and practice, in the church since the second century. In facing today's situation, he took the Reformers' position that the one authority is scripture, and took a strong stand for the finality and sufficiency of scripture which he regarded as inconsistent with an ongoing prophetic ministry. One comment here: it would seem there is a need for us to look more closely at the Biblical data on prophecy. The prayer and sharing session was chaired by Bernard Honeysett, the elder statesman of Reformed conferences. It included contributions from Bill Clark (radio work), J. Anayunde (literature work in Nigeria) and a strong contingent from

Ireland (church planting work, etc.). Geoff Thomas preached, with his usual feeling, on 'Living and Dying unto the Lord', from Romans 14:8. Herbert Carson ably chaired a discussion session on the role of the church in relation to society, and, in the final session, Erroll Hulse, with the infectious enthusiasm we have come to expect, spoke on motivation for evangelism.

In my opinion, the conference suffered from a certain lack of coherency. Also there are many areas with which all of us are familiar and a tendency to dwell on them suggested that the Carey Conference would have to tackle the problem of inertia. There are issues with which we need to grapple (theological and practical) and concerning which our view-points may vary. We need to sharpen our thinking by brotherly, but honest, interaction. In this connection, the conference was poorer because of the absence of some who could well contribute in such areas.

I know that the conference organisers are bearing all these factors in mind for the future. The Carey Conference is still the only reformed and baptistic gathering in this country which brings together such a wide-ranging group of men. Despite the negative observations, I came away more convinced than ever of its importance. □□□

VALUABLE LESSONS FROM THE MONTANIST MOVEMENT

(continued from page 24)

Once the finality of Scripture is denied, the door is open to all manner of excess, which eventually kills. Church history teaches quite plainly that when the people of God face difficulty, the only way to triumph is to continue obeying and proclaiming the whole counsel of God. New methods or beliefs might seem more attractive for a season, but we are concerned with eternity. To some it might appear paradoxical that it was the Puritans who produced the finest body of experimental Christian literature in the post New Testament era. Yet it is logical, for if we are faithful to his word God will reward with his presence. After all the Scriptures are the living, vibrant word of God, not the invention of some arid theologian.

Mature well researched works on Church History only give the Montanists a cursory mention. They were a short lived irrelevance. Despite all their good intentions that is the future which awaits their Twentieth Century counterparts. We must look to God to do great things in his way and not in ours. □□□

Reformation Today is a bi-monthly magazine published by Cuckfield Baptist Church, Sussex.

Editor

ERROLL HULSE
5 Fairford Close, Haywards Heath, West Sussex
RH16 3EF

Associate Editors

DAVID KINGDON
Can-y-nant, Cnwc-y-dintir,
Cardigan SA 431 BA, Dyfed, W. Wales.

JOHN DAVISON, Scotland
12 Keir Street, Perth.

JIM VAN ZYL, South Africa
22 Verbenia Street, Lynnwood Ridge, Pretoria 0002.

WAYNE MACK, U.S.A.
511 Fisher Lane, Warminster, Pa. 18974.

Agents

Agents to whom subscriptions should be sent.

BRITISH ISLES *P.O. Box 106, Haywards Heath, Sussex RH16 1QL.*

IRISH REPUBLIC **Alan Barker**,
Bethany, Cartron Hill, SLIGO.

AUSTRALIA **Ray Levick**,
27 Coven Avenue, Bayswater North, Victoria 3153.

NEW ZEALAND **Michael Drake**,
P.O. Box 51075, Pakuranga, Auckland.

U.S.A. **Bill Carey**,
506 Essex Avenue, Wilmington, Del. 19804.

Puritan Reformed,
1319 Newport-Gap Pike, Wilmington, Del. 19804.

J. W. Baker,
P.O. Box 1773, Bay City, Texas 77414.

Ron Edmonds,
2817 Dashwood Street, Lakewood, Calif. 90712.

CANADA **Max Latchford**,
1308 Griffith Place, Oakville, Ontario L6H 2V8.

Dale Cogswell,
R.R.3, Oromocto, N.B. E2V 2G3.

SOUTH AFRICA **Martin Holdt**,
Box 33226, Glenstantia 0010.

NETHERLANDS **D. H. Gritter**,
Beekmanstraat 85, 8265 ZX Kampen.

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