

REFORM- ATION TODAY'83



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Editorial

Correspondence has been received which pleads for simplicity to be maintained, this being a magazine designed for both pew and pulpit. The concern arose because of the technical nature of the first article on Biblical Theology by Don Garlington of Durham, England. The editor assures his readers that there is no plan to make this journal compete with the large number of very technical papers on theology that are available. Having said that it is necessary to point out that some articles by their very nature require slow reading and rereading. Sometimes such material is the most rewarding and I have no hesitation in putting the articles on Biblical Theology into that category.

The life of Cornelius Winter

Whitefield, Winter, Jay, Spurgeon — one life helps and moulds the next. This is well illustrated in the case of Whitefield's instrumentality in raising up Cornelius Winter. Biographical material has priority in this issue as a reminder of our need for warm hearts and practical daily devoted living.

Sola Scriptura?

Is the Scripture, the Bible, our only source of authority? What did the second century Christians believe? How did we arrive at the position of Scripture only for our authority? The material by pastor Bob Sheehan was given at the Carey ministers' conference in January this year. He explains the position concerning the claims made for complementary and supplementary prophecies. Because we lay stress on the Bible the jibe is made that we worship the Father, the Son and the Scripture. In fact much more attention has been given to the person and work of the Holy Spirit than to the person and work of Christ, that is if we are to look at the book titles in print today. Evangelicals generally are deplorably weak on the subject of Christology. We should try and redress the balance in future issues of the magazine.

A young woman survives the Leicester Conference!

Great Britain is ruled by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. When young Petra van Zonneveld arrived at the annual Leicester Conference

for male ministers shivers of horror ran through the tiny minority who still have the courage to stand up and fight for men's rights! Petra's subsequent detailed reports of the 20th Leicester Conference appeared in a Reformation Daily Newspaper in Holland which represents the views of the Hervormd Bond and the Gereformeerde Gemeente. The young lady, a daughter of the manse, was not embarrassed by being the only female among 250 ministers. This is how she begins her report:

The ministers' conference in England is strictly for men. Without exception women in the past have been turned away. The reason why I was not overwhelmed by disappointment was due alone to the fact that I had travelled so far. 'It is because you have come from such a distance that you are not turned away,' said the earnest Dr. John de Witt, chairman in chief of the Conference.

Petra who as a reporter and journalist was required to sit apart up in the gallery which is reserved for our much esteemed friend Peter James (who defends his recording equipment like a fierce colonel of the Queen's Guards), and latecomers.

The young lady reporter who used photos to enliven her accurate and fairly full descriptions went on to say:

We were also not permitted to take photographs during the conference. John de Witt declared: 'We are not here to have our portraits displayed all over the place!' Only once did Mr. de Witt give opportunity for informal photos to be taken which was on the steps outside the church.

If you desire a detailed and accurate report of the 20th Leicester Conference you can obtain Petra's description written of course in Dutch, from Ref. Dagblad, Postbus 670, 7300 A R Apeldoorn, Holland. It is a matter of profound thanksgiving that our lives are made so much more fascinating by so widely diversant personalities as the strict Dr. de Witt and the only girl who has ever survived Leicester Conference! We need such diver-

(continued on inside back cover)

The Life of Cornelius Winter

by Bernard Honeysett

His Birth and Early Life

Cornelius Winter was born in Greys Inn Lane, Holborn on October 9th, 1742. He was the ninth child of John and Catherine Winter. His mother was his father's second wife. His father died when he was nine months old and his mother died of consumption when he was seven years old. He was mainly cared for by his mother's sister who lived with them to protect her from 'one of the most cruel husbands that ever disgraced human nature'. At his mother's death his brother of 23 and sister of 17 were the only survivors of the nine children and his brother because of bad conduct enlisted in the East Indian service and died abroad. His sister was led into vice and sin and as a result of that he had to go to the workhouse. He was able to continue at school and attend all the services of the church Sundays and weekdays and seems to have been a very pious child.

A cousin was dying and on his deathbed he requested his brother (another cousin of Winter) to take this lad from the school. He did so and for twelve years he kept him a virtual slave and treated him so cruelly it was a wonder he ever survived.

Although not converted he gave great attention to religious things. He heard George Whitefield a few times and was impressed by his preaching. He was converted by his sermon on 1 Corinthians 15:51, 52 on April 9th, 1760 when he was 17 years of age. He soon joined the society at Whitefield's tabernacle.

Entry into the Ministry

Winter was soon exhorting, as it was called in those days, and that was quickly followed by preaching. Whitefield suggested he should be initiated into Latin grammar but quickly put a stop to it in order that Winter might give more time to attending to Whitefield's business of which there was a great deal. He was soon preaching every night and two or three times every Sabbath to various congregations in and around London. Whitefield esteemed Winter highly but wanted to keep him as a kind of steward of his house. About this time Winter preached his first sermon at Whitefield's Tabernacle and has this to say about it.

He gave me a mild reception; the interview was short. It was on Wednesday I waited upon him; he said he should expect me to preach at the tabernacle on the next morning at 6 o'clock and appointed the time when I should again come to him.

I heard him in the evening and felt much when he informed the congregation that a stranger recommended by Mr. Berridge would preach on the morrow morning at 6 o'clock.

I had little rest that night and prayed rather than studied for the service. A larger congregation than usual assembled. The sextonist was astonished when she found I was going into the pulpit. When I made my appearance the people were as much struck by seeing me, for many knew me, as I was by their general whisper. I endeavoured to speak from Ephesians 3 and 4. I was so exceedingly agitated that I knew not what I said.

From that morning, however, the prejudice of my religious friends under whose censure I had lain was removed and I found it a blessing to have Mr. Whitefield's support.

Personal Observations on Whitefield

Winter says that George Whitefield had no special times for sermon preparation and used no notes but spent two or three hours in solitude before preaching. His Sunday morning discourses were more doctrinal and expository when he showed more particularly his knowledge and learning. A very interesting and enlightening description of Whitefield's home is given. We must remember that this was written by one who lived with him and was with him in America when he died. He was his son in the faith and had a great regard for him.

One of Winter's descriptions of Whitefield's domestic life reads as follows:

He was impatient of contradiction but this is a fault to be charged on almost all great people. He was not happy in his wife but I fear some who had not all the religion they profess contributed to this. He did not intentionally make his wife unhappy. He always preserved great decency and decorum in his conduct towards her. Her death set his mind much at liberty. She certainly did not behave in all respects as she ought. She could be under no temptation from his conduct towards the other sex for he was a very pure man, a strict example of the chastity he inculcated upon others.

His expectations generally went before the abilities of his servants to perform his commands. He was very exact in the times appointed for his meals, a few minutes' delay would be considered a great fault. He was irritable but soon appeased. Not patient enough one day to receive a reason for his being disappointed by a particular occurrence he hurt the mind of one who was studious to please. He discovered it by the tears it occasioned and on reflection he himself burst into tears, saying, 'I shall live to be a peevish old man and everybody will tire of me'. He frequently broke the force of his passion by saying, 'How could you do so, I would not have served you so'. He never commanded haughtily and always took care to applaud when a person did right.

He never indulged parties at the table. A select few might now and then breakfast with him, dine with him on a Sunday or sup with him on a Wednesday night. In the latter indulgence he was scrupulously exact to break up in time. In the height of the conversation I have known him to abruptly say, 'But we forget ourselves' and rising from his seat and advancing to the door added 'Come gentlemen, it is time for all good folks to be at home'. Whether only by himself or having but a second his table must be spread elegantly though it produced but a loaf and a cheese. He was unjustly charged with being given to appetite. His table was never spread with variety. A cowheel was his favourite dish and I have known him cheerfully say, 'How surprised would the world be if they could peep in on Dr. Squintum and see a cowheel only upon his table'.

He was neat to the extreme in his person and everything about him. Not a paper must be left out of place or put up irregularly. Each piece of furniture must likewise be in its place before he retired to rest. He said he did not think he should die easy if he thought his gloves were out of their place. There was no rest after four in the morning nor sitting up after ten in the evening. He never made a purchase but he paid the money immediately. For small articles the money was taken in the hand.

He was truly generous and seldom denied relief. More was expected from him than was meet. He was tenacious in his friendship and when the transition of providence moved from prosperity to adversity he moved with it to abide with his friends. He felt sensibly when he was deserted and would remark, 'The world and the church ring changes'.

Disappointed by many, he had not sufficient confidence in mankind and from hence I believe it was he dreaded the thought of outliving his usefulness. He often dined among his friends, usually connecting a comprehensive prayer with his thanksgiving when the table was dismissed in which he noticed particular cases relative to the family and never protracted his visit long after dinner. He appeared often tired of popularity and said he almost envied the man who could take his choice of food at a meeting house and pass unnoticed. He apprehended he would not glorify God in his death by any remarkable testimony and was desirous to die suddenly.

My intimate knowledge of him admits of my acquitting him of the charge of affectation in the pulpit. He had a most peculiar art of speaking personally to you, in a congregation of four thousand people. He was averse to much singing after preaching, supposing it diverted the savour of the subject. Nothing awkward, nothing careless appeared about him in the pulpit, nor do I ever recollect his stumbling upon a word. To his ordinary as well as his public appearance this observation applies: whether he frowned or smiled, whether he looked grave or placid, it was nature acting in him.

Visit to America and Refusal of Ordination into the Church of England

Cornelius Winter set sail with Whitefield on his last voyage to America on September 4th, 1769. Although delayed for several weeks by bad weather, they arrived on November 30th. Whitefield's decease was to take place on September 30th, 1770.

While he was in America Winter preached to and cared for the negroes on an estate where the owner Mr. Zububuhler had died and left a legacy to support a Church of England minister to do his work. Winter experienced a great deal of hardship and persecution but at that time he intended to spend the remainder of his life ministering and serving these poor neglected slaves. In order to do this he needed ordination into the Church of England and returned to obtain this with excellent letters of commendation to the Bishop of London. Nobody could have had better testimonies than he had. He had a most perilous voyage back to England and landed on January 30th, 1771. He at once proceeded to London, delivered Whitefield's will and was requested to make his home at the Tabernacle. All his efforts to obtain ordination failed, the bishop treating him most coldly. It was quite obvious that the sole reason for his refusal was his association with Whitefield and his evangelical views. So the door to return to America closed forever.

He gives us an interesting sidelight on his financial position while he was in America. He says,

A circumstance not unworthy of note is that on going out I landed in Charleston with two guineas in my pocket and by making Mr. Whitefield a present of half a dozen bottles of port wine I was reduced to £1 4s 0d. I acquitted myself more properly in Georgia and had more occasions to exercise humanity and brought home 12 guineas.

Back in England

Winter went to Bristol on April 8th, 1771 when he was about 30 years of age and spent the remaining 35 years of his ministry in the west country holding two pastorates first at Marlborough in Wiltshire and finally at Painswick in Gloucestershire. Before that he had a kind of oversight at a little place where he lived called Christian Mulford.

While in Bristol preaching for the connection he made a very happy acquaintance with Rowland Hill which he said was one of the greatest mercies of his life and he preached for him annually for the remainder of his life.

His labours extended far and wide. He writes, 'In the years '74 and '75 I paid two visits to a destitute congregation in Lancaster and I introduced the gospel at Garstang where I believe it continues to this day.'

While he was in London, soon after he began to preach, he spent several months preaching in Canterbury and Chatham. He seems to have had these two charges. At that time he had his first legacy left to him. A gentleman left him half-a-crown and his Bible.

Ordination

His ordination took place at Christian Mulford on October 2nd, 1777. He was to have the care of three societies — Castle Combe, Christian Mulford and Chippenham but with no stipend from any of them. He said he lived upon providence in a couple of rooms, giving himself diligently to study, preaching and pastoral duties to people, many of whom were nearly as poor as himself. He even had to bear the expense of his ordination service himself. His labours met with considerable success and blessing and were very full. He writes of his ordination,

The day set apart for the solemnity had arrived. . . . It was honoured by the conversion of a whole family. The parents died in faith and the children are still walking in the truth. . . . The whole service continued five hours but was so far from being thought tedious by the congregation that members acknowledged that they were strangers to any unpleasant feeling. My own soul was truly solemn and I was so affected when I engaged in my part that my speech was sometimes interrupted and often broken. I engaged to take part of the trials as well as the comforts of the people. I then was devoted to serve more immediately.



Painswick — New Street from St. Mary's churchyard

Concerning his labours at that time he says,

I preached thrice on the Lord's day, met a society on the Monday evening, preached a lecture on the Thursday evening, preached in the country on Tuesday or on Wednesday or on Friday and very often had engagements on each day in the evening, and on Saturday I held a reading and prayer meeting. From this rule I seldom deviated and at the same time held a correspondence of which I have before remarked that it took up too much of my time and diverted me from more important pursuits in my younger days. Latterly it has become indispensable.

When he went and settled at the pastorate in Marlborough he was then paid the total sum of £30 per annum.

Marriage and Subsequent Ministry

One of the purposes of Winter's marriage seems to have been his need to increase his income for he felt it would be only a hindrance to unite with one as poor as himself. This is what he says upon the subject,

A friend who well knew my sentiments upon this head and conceived them proper engaged my indulging attention to Miss Brown. Well known in the neighbourhood, her respected character and conduct procured her universal esteem. He introduced me to her. She was supposed to be very affluent from the great liberality she exercised to the poor but she was enabled rather by industry and economy than from wealth or from considerable profits that she gained from her small farm which in conjunction with her youngest sister she rented and superintended. When I had been repeatedly in her company I was satisfied with her genuine piety and I addressed a plain letter to her. Therefore on April 20th, 1779 we entered into wedlock. We had previously considered that our joint income, being about £50 per annum, would not admit of our living in splendour and we had made our plans answerable to our pittance.

He was then aged about 36. He did not expect to have any children and indeed did not have any of his own but although he intended to give himself now wholly to the ministry he soon found he was at the head of a large family. He felt constrained to take in some children to educate. First of all, his deacon's eldest child. He was a very poor man but he felt he was worthy. Soon after that he took another one from Bristol and soon the numbers increased to twelve lads. So he started this work, which he carried on for several years while he was at Marlborough, of educating children. He virtually had a school in his home. Later on he changed that and he took in young men and prepared them for the ministry. There were a number of these and William Jay was one of them. It seems that Winter was particularly fond of Jay whom he often took out on his preaching excursions with him. It is interesting that Jay was invited to go to London to preach. He was there for a week or two and great crowds thronged to hear him preach. When he returned and reported to Winter, the latter said this was very bad for a young man and he strongly advised him to retire into the country, which Jay did and thus he became settled in Bath where he ministered for so many years. It is interesting to speculate what would have happened had Jay not taken Winter's advice and launched himself out in this way. William Jay had been specially noticed by Winter in the congregation at Tisbury. He came to Winter's academy on April 2nd, 1785. At one time Winter had two assistants working with him in his academy which was run in his home. He seems to have taken the pastorate at Marlborough about 1778 and removed to Painswick on August 2nd, 1788 having ministered for ten years to a large congregation, most of whom were very poor. His removal seems to have been partly caused by giving offence to one of the leading families who provided £10 out of the £30 for his annual stipend. He opposed a marriage which he felt to be wholly unsuitable. This gave much offence to the other members of the family although the father remained loyal to him but just about this time the father died. Winter had felt that a Mr. Sloper who ministered at Devizes would agree to his becoming his assistant which it appears was agreeable to the congregation, but the minister was unwilling to take any step and advised Winter to trust upon providence. He, being recommended to the church at Painswick, where he had preached but not for 17 years, because of the opposition of a deacon, accepted the call their having just been disappointed and divided over another minister who had served them. Incidentally, the deacon was reconciled and they walked in the closest unity and harmony for the remainder of his life. He ministered at Painswick for 20 years.

Soon after his settlement at Painswick a very promising young man who had been with him had gone to Bristol College to complete his education for the ministry and who was engaged to be married, died quite suddenly and unexpectedly. Winter seems to have felt this acutely. He was a man of very tender feelings and although he was a retiring man and loved solitude he had this warm and deep affection for his friends.

His ministry at Painswick seems to have been blessed, so much so that a larger meeting house was built to accommodate the increase in congregations. The

Lord providentially provided for his needs by a cousin who lived in London who settled her estate upon him requesting she might come and live with them, to which they agreed and just 24 hours after coming under his roof she expired. He looked on this as a wonderful divine interposition.

Winter's Death

Cornelius Winter exchanged pulpits with a Mr. Jeary of Rodborough on Sunday, December 13th, 1807 which was his last Sunday of public ministry. His text was 2 Corinthians 5:1 and many said it seemed as if he were preaching his own funeral sermon. He spent that night in Rodborough and the next day went to his friends, Mr. and Mrs. Cooper at Woodchester, where he was taken worse and insisted on being taken home the next day but before leaving he knelt to give thanks for their kindness and to commit them to God, the effort was almost too much for him so he could not speak the whole of the time he was being driven home. He continued to linger on till January 19th putting his papers in order etc. and his last letter dated December 31st was written to Jay and is included in his memoirs.

The sabbath was now come that was to end in the rest that remains for the people of God. In the morning he prayed, 'Lord bless and unite my people'. Soon after he suddenly cried out, 'He is my salvation, he is all my salvation'. About 11 o'clock he exclaimed 'I am ready, I am ready, I want to go home'. When one of his friends looked upon him and asked him how he did he replied, 'Like a dying man, may the Lord bless you and your family'. He enquired, as some of the family returned from worship, the state of the congregation, and was pleased to learn that it was large. A little before eight in the evening he said, 'Tell my good wife I am going'. He then stretched himself out, laid his arms at length upon his body and indistinctly said, 'Come Lord Jesus' and without a groan fell asleep.

A huge concourse of people gathered for the interment which was in a vault immediately below the pulpit. There were over thirty ministers present and it appears 'the weeping was so loud as to be hardly restrained within the bounds of decency'. All seemed to feel and verify the words of one, 'the blameless life, the artless tenderness, the pious simplicity, the modest resignation, the patient sickness, the quiet death, are remembered only to add value to the loss and to deepen sorrow for what cannot be recalled'. It is interesting to note that the following Sunday every minister in Gloucestershire agreed to preach a funeral sermon and doubtless many other students and others preached memorial services. I think that shows how widely he was esteemed and loved.

His Character

William Jay, in his biography of Cornelius Winter, devotes 95 pages to his character. He does this under four headings: talents and acquisitions, as a tutor, as a minister and as a Christian. Under the first heading he says that he had more than a competent knowledge of the original languages and read the

Scriptures in them. He well understood the Latin tongue and was proficient in French. His acquaintance with general science, though not profound, was extensive. He knew no luxury so great as a book. His reading was constant and diversified.

As a tutor he was both master of a school and president of an academy. Jay says,

In training young men up for the ministry he did not precisely conform to the common methods of education in the seminaries of the Protestant dissenters. It could hardly be deemed necessary. He seldom had more than three or four at a time and the formalities of an academy would of course be much dispensed with by a series of lectures. He was a father with his sons rather than a tutor with his students. They were almost constantly with him. He was always familiarly instructing them and the love he inspired was such as to endear everything he said. Whether they were walking in the field or sitting in the house at the fireside in the evening or at the table at meals, improvement was blended with pleasure. Reading always attended the hours of breakfast and tea, intermingled with remarks derived from the subject.

It was no unusual thing for one of his students to accompany him in his visits to the chamber of sickness or house of mourning. He knew that young men should be sober minded and that by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better. To prepare them for social and edifying intercourse they also frequently attended him in his friendly visits. They sometimes joined him in his preaching excursions. There are few things in my life that I can remember with so much pleasure as my going with him, walking by the side of his little horse and occasionally riding, on a fine summer's evening, into a neighbouring village, and returning again the same night or very early in the morning. In these instances I was required to take sometimes a part and sometimes the whole of the service but it was a privilege rather than a task to do anything for him and before him.

He heard our discourses and prayers with the greatest tenderness and beamed with pleasure at every sign of improvement. A backwardness to notice imperfections was his custom. He loved to commend. It was hardly in his power to find fault. Yet though his approbation seemed easily gained it was not rendered the less desirable. It was delicious to enjoy and therefore it always supplied a stimulus.

A letter written to William Jay when he was coming to the academy:

Dear Billy,

Among the various things which employ my thoughts your coming to Marlborough is one. I hope in time that it will be brought about and that you will pray for the blessing of God on our designs and endeavours. You will not forget the object we have in view. It is to prepare you for, and introduce you into, the service of the sanctuary. In which service it is necessary that you act properly and shine to the glory of God and be useful to your fellow mortals by being devotedly given up in heart and life to God himself. If you are not really converted yourself you will talk very awkwardly about conversion to others. If you do not love Jesus you will want a most powerful constraint to preach him as the only Lord and Saviour. Pray therefore for a renewed heart if you have not it already and for a growth in grace if that divine principle is already implanted. Then you will enter upon all the necessary studies like a devoted and dependent youth whose every

moment will discover holiness to the Lord. You will then be prepared to partake of the afflictions of the gospel and enjoy the spiritual and temporal blessings God may graciously confer upon you to his praise.

I am, dear Billy, your affectionate friend,
Cornelius Winter.

As a minister he is said to have been quite orderly with few outward attractions as to his manner of dress. He was venerable in the pulpit but not striking. He is said to have had no action. His voice was not very clear or powerful, his utterance was rather slow and inanimated, a striking contrast to George Whitefield's. The methods of preaching he used were various. Obviously he had a great concern for his people. He visited and advised. He had an unusual gift in prayer. He could turn any occasion or incident into profitable confession and petition. He appeared to excel on special occasions. In doctrine he was truly Calvinistic without any of the extremes which seem to mar some men's ministries.

Regarding Winter's use of the different types of preaching Jay writes:

The essay mode, this indeed can hardly be said to treat a text at all and was probably introduced for the sake of brevity or the indignant extreme of the endless multiplicity of heads and particulars that formerly prevailed.

The expository which explains a portion of Scripture as it lies intermixed with practical addresses in the process and sometimes closed with general reflections in the review.

The observational which particularly applies to historical passages and contains a succession of remarks founded upon circumstances which require improvement rather than explanation.

The characteristic which takes for its subject the narrative of an individual and holds it up to view, marking its prominent features to excite admiration or aversion.

The topical which illustrates a theme or a proposition derived from the design of the words, regardless of the phraseology, and to which a hundred texts would be equally applicable.

The textual which deduces the divisions and materials from the language of the text.

All these methods except the first Mr. Winter occasionally employed but the last was his more common one and he excelled in it. How many passages of Scripture under his management were rendered peculiarly instructive, beautiful and interesting.

As a Christian he seems to have excelled in his own home where all was kindness and harmony. He kept up a very large correspondence with a very large circle of friends and he sought to carry out the piece of sound advice given by Whitefield 'be servantlike but not servile'.

Carey Family Conference

8-13 August 1983

Elim Bible College, Capel, Surrey

Speakers Achille Blaize with a series on the family.

Erroll Hulse on Luther, his experience of grace, his principle of interpreting the Word, Justification by Faith, law and grace, all related to the book of Galatians, this being the 500th anniversary of Luther's birth.

Austin Walker and Peter Buss.

For details write to:

Andrew Symonds, 2 Mill Hall Cottages,
Whitemans Green, Cuckfield, Sussex RH17 5HX

A few lessons to be learnt from the life of Cornelius Winter

It seems to me that this life sets before us an ideal way of training for the ministry and pastoral office. How many are thrown in at the deep end and enter the pastoral office without any experience.

The value of correspondence and the need to be open to divine guidance. Winter was a very prolific letter-writer. He had a tremendous correspondence with all kinds of people. This is an art which we have largely lost but a letter may often be a help, far more of a help perhaps than a telephone call, if it is prayerfully dictated and wisely written it can be referred to by the favoured recipient again and again.

Thirdly, we need to be reminded that the Christian life, and particularly that of a minister, is one of warfare. We are always looking for something easier but have no scriptural warrant for it.

Fourthly, even the best of men and the greatest of preachers had their failings and their weakness, men of like passions. . . . That only the example of our Lord Jesus can be absolutely followed. I think that what Winter says of Whitefield really brings that out better than I have seen it anywhere else.

Lastly, with such a rich legacy of history, especially of biography, we ought to be better and wiser preachers and pastors than any of those who have gone before. Alas, how little we seem to profit. We still make the same mistakes. We still fall into some of the errors and manifest the same weaknesses and ignorance at times. May God help us each to lay to heart and diligently apply the lessons of history in the church and through our forefathers, we certainly ought with all the advantage we have to be better preachers and better pastors than we are.

Most of the material in this article was gleaned from *Memoirs of the Life and Character of the Late Rev. Cornelius Winter by William Jay*, first American edition 1811. My interest in Winter arose from my close friendship with the late Pastor Brooke of Bathford and our mutual interest in William Jay, as together we visited places where these men ministered. They covered an interesting period of church history between Whitefield and Spurgeon. The memoirs are hard to come by and would make a useful contribution for the Banner of Truth Trust to consider republishing.

Mortification of sin – a necessity

Every year at Passover Time (our Easter Time) the Orthodox Jews hunt high and low in their houses to get rid of all remnants of old bread or crumbs. This they do in accordance with the commands of Exodus 12:14, 15. We are not obliged to do that now because Christ our Passover has been sacrificed for us (1 Cor. 5:7). Christ has fulfilled all the figures and types of the Old Testament. Their lessons however still apply. As we see from the teaching of 1 Corinthians 5:6-8 we are now to hunt high and low and search out and get rid of all evil thoughts, all hatred, resentments, sinful imaginations, crude adulterous lusts, covetousness, jealousies and pride. All malice and all immorality is to be purged out. All pornography of the heart is to be thrown out and burned. The question is how can we achieve this? How can we overcome those evil thoughts when they invade our minds or when they spring up from corruption within ourselves? The text of Scripture which deals practically and thoroughly with this (perhaps better than any other) is Romans 8:13.

For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.

Stonemasons sometimes tap the stone and it falls into convenient sections. We will give the above text a tap thus:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| 1. The duty described: | <i>put to death the misdeeds of the body</i> |
| 2. To whom this work applies: | <i>you — it is the work of believers</i> |
| 3. How it is to be done: | <i>through the Spirit</i> |
| 4. The promise attached: | <i>you will live</i> |
| 5. The warning attached: | <i>if you do not you will die.</i> |

1. The duty described

Put to death the misdeeds of the body

If the terms used in the text are explained then the duty will be described. The term 'body' is used because it is the seat or instrument of all our actions. It is a 'body of sin'. It is the body that has come from Adam. It has an Adamic, fallen, sinful nature. It is called the old man (Col. 3:9; Eph. 4:22). We are in fact made new men in Christ and can never be what we were as unregenerate. However we still have the remnants of corruption within us. These as we will see are many and exceedingly dangerous. Mortification is therefore essential. The misdeeds of the body refers to all evil actions as listed in Galatians 5:19; sexual immorality, idolatry, hatred, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, drunkenness and so on. To mortify or to put to death means to deprive of life or power. By plunging the knife into the heart of the beast it is slaughtered. To mortify is to ruthlessly put to death, to deprive the life of lust or sin.

2. To whom this work applies

you — it is the work of believers

To those who have been united with Christ the apostle says, 'Put to death therefore whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed' (Col. 3:5). If the same apostle found it necessary to 'beat my body and make it my slave' (beat: *hupopiazō*, meaning to treat severely, to strike under the eye so as to make it black and blue, by violent and repeated blows I subdue the flesh and bring it into subjection).

If the illustrious Paul found such mortification necessary, how much more ordinary believers?

The reason why no lust should be left unmortified is that every lust has the capacity to grow to a deadly proportion, to be strident, to be imperious, to be vile and to aim its height. Resentment can grow to rebellion, evil desire can become adultery (which is what happened in King David's case), unforgiveness can grow to anger and strife or even striking at a man which is the same as murder. Every lust aims at its maximum expression. Unbelief and lukewarmness can lead to falling away. Even when lust has been subdued it has the power to revive and attempt to grow again. The conflict is continual. Paul speaks of the conflict that is waged continually in believers between the Spirit and the flesh (Gal. 5:17). Speaking of the corrupt elements still left in himself, Paul said that he was in that respect unspiritual and sold as a slave to sin (Rom. 7:14). His carnal nature of corruption had absolutely nothing to commend it. It was to be killed. It was to be mortified ruthlessly. War had to be waged against it (Rom. 7:23).

3. How it is to be done

through the Spirit

Only those who are in Christ and who have the gift of the Holy Spirit, that is, his indwelling power, can effectively mortify sin in their hearts. The soul and substance of all false religion is self-righteousness, self-justification, self-effort. God the Holy Spirit in all the glory and power of his being is our guarantee of victory over indwelling sin (Rom. 7:25ff.). Nevertheless note the order that has been used, 1. *You* must mortify lust, 2. You must mortify lust *by the Spirit*. It is not a matter of it all being done for us while we are passive. Not at all! By the enablement of the Spirit we wage war.

4. The promise attached

you will live

A Christian can only be happy on condition that sin does not have dominion over him (Rom. 6:14). Jesus said, 'you will know the truth and the truth will make you free' (Jn. 8:32). This freedom can only be maintained by perpetual vigilance and mortification of any sin or lust that may arise. The peace and happiness of a Christian depends upon this freedom from sin. This is the life abundant which Jesus promised (Jn. 10:10). A victorious life now will be crowned with eternal and joyful life when the race is completed.

Studies in Biblical Theology

The Character and Task of Biblical Theology

This is the second in a series of articles by Don Garlington. The first study appeared in R.T. 72. The material is rich; to preachers inestimable. Do not be disturbed if you have to read this work slowly. If you grasp the principles your whole outlook will be revolutionized. See editorial comment.

In this second introductory study of biblical theology it will be appropriate to compare it with its older sister, systematic theology. In so doing, we shall be in a more advantageous position to evaluate the distinctive contributions of each branch of theological study, and more especially to appreciate biblical theology as it forms an important element in our understanding of the Word of God as a whole.

The Mutual Compatibility and Interdependence of the Two

In relating biblical and systematic theology to each other, balance is the all-important factor. John Murray has written that systematic theology is 'the most noble of all studies'. This is so because 'its province is the whole counsel of God and seeks, as no other discipline, to set forth the riches of God's revelation in the orderly and embrative manner which is its peculiar method and function'. Furthermore, 'All other departments of theological discipline contribute their

5. The warning attached

if you do not you will die.

I have never known any professing believer survive with a consistent testimony who is not willing to apply discipline in his life. This is what our Lord meant when he said, 'whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life, for my sake will find it, and, 'anyone who does not take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me' (Matt. 10:38, 39). This talk about the cross was a shocking thing to those who had actually witnessed physical crucifixion. It is noteworthy that Jesus was talking about crucifixion in this way before he himself was crucified. That painful nailing of the body that it may expire is a most suitable emblem of mortification. That is what must be done with whatever sins arise from within. The need is imperative. Without such mortification, achieved by the power of God the Holy Spirit, you will die. But if you believe in, and entrust your life to Christ, he will give you all you need and bring you into his eternal kingdom.

John Owen's *The Mortification of Sin in Believers* (Works vol. 6, pp. 1-322) is unrivalled as an extended and detailed treatise, highly commended to preachers, but also to those who are serious and diligent readers or students.

findings to systematic theology and it brings all the wealth of knowledge derived from these disciplines to bear upon the more inclusive systemization which it undertakes'.¹

It is certainly true that systematics incorporate the findings of the other departments of theological study, and it is equally true that this endeavour is a noble one. Nevertheless, to make systematic theology the crowning achievement of all other theological activities is to overstate the case. I am inclined to think that none of the major branches of biblical study exists for the purpose of providing 'raw materials' for any other. It would be more proper to say that each discipline provides a system of 'checks and balances' for the others. And as regards the relation between biblical and systematic theology specifically, a balanced approach will view the two as being of equal importance and usefulness. Vos is certainly correct when he writes: 'Each of these two is necessary, and there is no occasion for a sense of superiority in either.'² R. B. Gaffin adds that 'the line between what is usually called New Testament (biblical) theology and systematic theology becomes difficult to detect'.³

By way of illustration, we may think of biblical and systematic theology in much the same way as we do of biblical exegesis and hermeneutics. That is to say, we cannot properly do exegesis without a sound hermeneutical method; and yet biblical hermeneutics are not arrived at arbitrarily, but rather they are derived from the Bible itself. This means that there is an indispensable give-and-take relationship between exegesis and hermeneutics. Likewise, biblical and systematic theology must be viewed as mutually dependent and mutually supportive of each other. It is, in other words, impossible to do either in abstraction from the other. Prof. Murray recognizes this relationship, because he writes that 'systematic theology will fail of its task to the extent to which it discards its rootage in biblical theology as properly conceived and developed'.⁴ The same can be applied in the opposite direction as well. A biblical theology which chooses to ignore systematics will invariably arrive at heterodox conclusions as regards central biblical issues.⁵ The upshot of all of this is to say that there exists between biblical and systematic theology a relationship of *mutual interdependence and interpenetration*.

Having spoken of the general relation of the two disciplines under consideration, some attention should be given to more specific factors. The first of these is that the goal of biblical and systematic theology is the same. That is, both biblical and systematic theology have as their aim the organization of the biblical data into a form which can be readily assimilable by the student of the Scriptures. As will be seen presently, the organizational methods differ markedly; but even so, each of these branches of study seeks to co-ordinate what the Bible has to say in such a way as to illumine the whole counsel of God. Each of the two methods is artificial to a degree,⁶ yet both are perfectly justifiable because they endeavour to acquaint the Bible reader not merely with a set of facts but with the harmonious inter-relationships which the facts bear one to another.

In the second place, both systematic and biblical theology approach the Bible as a finished whole. It is at this point that statements by Vos and Murray have to be modified. Vos maintains that biblical theology 'deals with revelation as a divine activity, not as the finished product of that activity'.⁷ Similarly, Murray remarks that 'Biblical theology deals with the data of special revelation from the standpoint of its history; systematic theology deals with the same in its totality as a finished product. The method of systematic theology is logical, that of biblical theology is historical'.⁸ By way of response, it is true that biblical theology is more concerned with the historical process of revelation than is systematics. Yet it is equally true that both types of theology approach the Scriptures as we now possess them, and we possess them as the completed speaking of God in his Son. Each branch of study has to do with a completed Bible (closed canon) as a literary whole, not simply with history (in the case of biblical theology) as in some sense detached from its inscripturated record. Along these lines, the only real difference between biblical and systematic theology is the structure which the one imposes on the whole Bible as distinct from the other.⁹

Thirdly, it will be appropriate here actually to speak of the methodological differences between systematic and biblical theology. Assuming that both types of theological study approach the Bible as a completed whole, as a finished product of revelation, it is proper to distinguish the two disciplines along the following lines.

(1) Systematic theology comes to the whole Bible and extracts everything relevant for the topic under discussion (e.g., the doctrine of God). In this sense the Bible can be compared to a circle; the systematic theologian selects from the circle every bit of information pertinent to his concern. (2) The biblical theologian works not in terms of a circle but a time-line, the time-line of redemptive history. To be more specific, the biblical theologian is concerned with the *epochal process* of God's self-disclosure. This means that at various epochs or turning points in the history of salvation God has acted and spoken, and the biblical theologian is concerned with and sensitive to what God has done and said at each phase of redemption. The result of this is that the biblical theologian assumes the task of tracing theological themes in terms of their redemptive-historical development *from inception through* reiteration and expansion *to* definitive expression in Christ. Seen in this light, the timeline of redemptive history is to be conceived as sloping upward and not merely horizontal. (3) From this brief contrast of the two methodologies it is possible to say that whereas the approach of systematic is 'topical', that of biblical theology is 'historical'. It must be understood, however, that this is very much of a generalization. To one degree or the other both biblical and systematic theology must be concerned with topical arrangement and history. The division here, in other words, is not hard-and-fast. Much less is logic the central issue. Both Vos and Murray speak of systematics as being 'logical' in method as opposed to the historical orientation of biblical theology. However, logic is not the point of contrast. There is indeed a logic to the method of biblical theology,

but it is not the logic of the theological encyclopedia (the *loci*). It is, rather, the logic of the *progressive and graduated*¹⁰ *historical self-revelation of God*. Time and again the biblical theologian finds himself making logical deductions from the data of historical data of revelation.

In the fourth place, we notice that biblical theology is indispensable to the practice of systematic theology. Murray underscores this when he says: 'The fact is that only when systematic theology is rooted in biblical theology does it exemplify its true function and achieve its purpose.'¹¹ The point is important because unless systematics has its grounding in biblical theology, it will not be *living* and *powerful*. Some systematic theologies are very much like books of statistics; the information conveyed by them may be correct and to a degree useful, but they lack vitality. If our theology is to escape this, it must reflect an intimate acquaintance with the way of God's self-disclosure. The purpose of systematic theology is not to set forth so many proof texts but to display the true character of God with warmth and conviction. The purpose of systematic theology is to have an impact on men,¹² therefore it is indispensable for the systematic theologian ever to keep in contact with the manner in which God has entered into the realm of men and has made his impact on them. We do not, for example, simply say that God is faithful and then proceed to demonstrate statistically that this is so. Rather, we show from the biblical record how the covenant keeping God has on countless occasions shown himself faithful to his people.

The Distinctive Contribution of Biblical Theology

When biblical theology is considered as a distinctive discipline, several considerations come to mind. In the first place, there are two terms which are hallmarks of this particular aspect of theological study: 'progressive' and 'epochal'. Progressive revelation means that the self-disclosure of God moves *onwards* and *upward* until it reaches its zenith point in Christ. No one stage of revelation represents a completed whole until the advent of the Son of God in the flesh. Epochal revelation is the complement to progressive revelation. As Vos observes, redemption 'does not proceed with uniform motion, but rather as "epochal" in its onward stride. We can observe that where great epoch-making redemptive events accumulate, there the movement of revelation is correspondingly accelerated and its volume increases'.¹³ Along the same lines, Murray observes: 'The science concerned with the history of special revelation must take account of this epochal character and it would be an artificial biblical theology that did not adhere to the lines which this epochal feature prescribes'.¹⁴ Furthermore, 'The divisions which biblical theology recognizes and in terms of which it conducts its study are not, therefore, arbitrary but are demanded by the characteristics of redemptive and revelation history. The Bible is itself conscious of the distinctive periods into which the history of revelation falls'.¹⁵

Secondly, since the epochs of revelation are clearly discernable, our biblical theology must follow the progression dictated by the epochal character of the outworking of redemption. This means that we must resist the temptation to

import uncritically the revelatory data of one epoch into another epoch. But on the other hand, we must recognize that one epoch of revelation can illumine to a considerable degree the *original* meaning of another era. *Balance*, therefore, is the key factor here. An obvious illustration of these principles is that of the atoning sacrifices of the Old Testament. On the one hand, we do not assume that the believer during the Mosaic period saw Christ in the sacrifices as clearly as we do. Yet, on the other hand, we are not prevented from using the revelation in Christ as a tool for determining the intention of God in his prescription of animal sacrifice in the Mosaic ritual. From this we learn that the various epochs of revelation are distinct and must be understood in their original and historical import; but at the same time we are led to acknowledge that these eras often overlap and interpenetrate. A recognition of this will be an invaluable aid to our exegesis.

Assuming the validity of what has just been said, it follows, in the third place, that biblical theology more nearly reproduces the pattern of biblical revelation than any other theological discipline. It is true that biblical theology introduces certain modifications into the biblical materials; but even so, the Bible itself recognizes that the revelation of God has taken place in terms of historical eras or epochs. Therefore, biblical theology more nearly follows the original biblical pattern because its very purpose is to trace redemptive-historical motifs along the lines of these epochs. It would not be amiss to suggest in this regard that the New Testament writers were biblical theologians, because time and again they demonstrate how the Hebrew Scriptures have been fulfilled in Christ. As such, these authors provide us not only with a precedent for our own study of biblical theology but more especially with an example as to how we are to go about seeing Christ in all the Scriptures.¹⁶

In a concluding article on the character and task of biblical theology attention will be devoted to some general principles derived from special revelation and their significance for the actual process of doing biblical theology.

Notes

¹ 'Systematic Theology,' in *Collected Writings of John Murray*, Vol. 4, p. 4 (hereafter abbreviated as CW4).

² *Biblical Theology*, p. 14 (hereafter abbreviated as BT).

³ 'Biblical Theology and Systematic Theology,' in *The New Testament Student and Theology*, p. 49.

⁴ CW4, p. 19.

⁵ See the important criticisms of Murray respecting the modern critical practice of biblical theology, especially as regards the doctrine of the Word of God, CW4, pp. 11-14.

⁶ The only non-artificial method of Bible study is simply reading the text without imposing any

organization on the materials.

⁷ BT, p. 5.

⁸ CW4, p. 9.

⁹ 'The difference is merely one of Method,' Murray, CW4, p. 9.

¹⁰ That is, proceeding by degrees.

¹¹ CW4, p. 20.

¹² Prof. John Frame of Westminster Seminary defines systematic theology as 'the Word of God in action changing lives'.

¹³ BT, p. 7.

¹⁴ CW4, p. 18.

¹⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁶ See the introductory chapter of R. B. Gaffin's *The Centrality of the Resurrection*.

Earl Blackburn is a Reformed Baptist pastor who has been used to plant a church right in the heart of the state of Utah, the centre and throne of Mormonism. Readers will appreciate that he is well qualified to write on this theme.

Mormonism, its History and Doctrine

Mormonism is the nickname; the official name is The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (often abbreviated as L.D.S.). Of all the cults today, Mormonism is the fastest growing. Mormons are no longer an archaic band of polygamists located in Utah, with headquarters in Salt Lake City, but rather have emerged as being cosmopolitan with 'proselyting' centres in almost every major city in the world. There are 2½ times as many Mormons as there are Jehovah's Witnesses! In April, 1982, they baptized their 5 millionth convert and now have 14 temples and approximately 31,000 missionaries worldwide. Massive public relations campaigns have been launched, including multi-million dollar contracts with *The Reader's Digest* magazine, radio and TV, with special emphasis on the family, that are geared to remove the old stigma and attract many new members. Their desire is to be recognized as just another 'Christian Church'. With a phenomenal growth rate and an estimated income of 6 million dollars a day, the tide seems unstoppable! But just exactly who are the Mormons and the neatly dressed, clean-cut young men on bicycles that represent them? To answer this we must go back 178 years.

Mormonism began in Sharon, Vermont, December 23rd, 1805. On that date a son was born to Joseph Smith, Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith named Joseph Smith, Jr. When he was 10 years old the family moved to Palmyra, New York and then to Manchester. When Joseph was in his late teens an interesting thing began to take place in the town and the surrounding areas. The historical account is found in

The Pearl of Great Price, Joseph Smith, section 2:5-19.

There was a 'great revival of religion' occurring among the Methodists, Baptists and Presbyterians. Along with the 'revival' came much fighting over which church was right, and there was a lot of confusion. It is interesting to note that this was the time of Charles Finney and his 'revivals' in upstate New York. Joseph was disturbed because he did not know which church to join, so while reading the Bible one day, he came across a verse which brought comfort and guidance to his mind. The verse was James 1:5! Joseph, admitting his ignorance and lack of wisdom, decided to go to a grove of trees near his home and pray for wisdom to know which church to join. As he was 'agonizing earnestly' in prayer, a great light appeared above him, and as it drew closer he saw there were 'two distinct Personages' standing in this light (compare 2 Cor. 11:14). One of the 'Personages' looked to the other and said unto Joseph, "This is my beloved Son, hear ye him." Joseph then recognized them to be 'God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ'. Upon asking which church to join, Joseph was told, "none of them, because all the churches are wrong, their creeds are an abomination, and their professors are corrupt." He was then told, because he was an upright and virtuous young man, God had chosen him for a great work. This work was to restore the 'true church' back upon the earth, but he must continue faithful and true until that time. Joseph received other dreams and visions plus angelic appearances from 'Moroni'. One day the 'angel Moroni' appeared and led him to the spot where

'golden plates' were buried in the ground. After digging up the plates and taking them home, he began, 'under the power of God, along with the Urim and Thummim and the Seer stone', to translate the plates into English. The plates were written in an unknown language called 'Reformed Egyptian'. The result of Joseph's translating is what is known today as *The Book of Mormon*. When Joseph completed the translating, the 'angel Moroni' took the 'golden plates' away, presumably into heaven.

The Book of Mormon is a supposed account of the 'ancient inhabitants of the Americas'. The book covers a 1,000 year span, from 600B.C. to A.D.400. It describes the building of great civilizations, wars, revivals of 'true religion', and often repeated apostasies, the post-resurrection visit of Christ to America, and the ultimate destruction of the entire American nation and peoples. Mormon was the American prophet who compiled all of the historical records and put them upon 'golden plates'. This is where the book derives its name. At the last general conference of the L.D.S. religion, *The Book of Mormon* received a new addition to its name; it is now officially called, *The Book of Mormon, Another Testament of Jesus Christ*.

In 1829, John the Baptist came down from Heaven and laid his hands upon the heads of Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, restoring the lost 'Aaronic priesthood'. And on April 6th, 1830, Joseph Smith organized what we know today as The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He became its first 'Prophet, Revelator, and Seer' and received many new revelations. Since the Mormons believe in continued revelation, they have two other books besides the Holy Bible and *The Book of Mormon*, which they considered inspired and part of their 'standard works'. They are *The Doctrine and Covenants* issued in 1833 and *The Pearl of Great Price* published in 1902.

The above is a brief general history of Mormonism and it is the basis of its missionary message. The L.D.S. acknowledge that their religion rises or falls upon the authenticity of the 'Joseph Smith testimony' and the 'witness of the Holy Ghost' to divine inspiration of *The Book of Mormon*. Many people have become Mormons because the missionaries have repeatedly 'bore their testimonies that this is true'.

To those who have been brought into saving union with the Lord Jesus there is an immediate recoiling from this fable. Why? What is wrong with the story of Mormonism? First, Mormonism is founded upon the wrong premise of a divine manifestation of God to Joseph Smith. Joseph dogmatically states he actually, physically and personally saw God (this vision is anti-trinitarian as are the Mormons to this very day). This is a direct contradiction of John 1:18 and 1 Timothy 6:16, which declare that no one has seen God at any time, nor can anyone ever see him.

Second, Mormonism is founded upon the false precept that *all* the churches are wrong. Mormons believe sometime after A.D.100 all the old apostles were killed before they could ordain new ones, and the true church went into a total apostasy. They quote 2 Thessalonians 2:3 to prove this. As the Mormon apostle Orson Pratt said, '... the gates of Hell prevailed against the Church' (*Journal of Discourses* vol. 13, p. 125). Accordingly, there was no true church upon the earth from then until 1830 when Joseph Smith restored the 'true church' back on the earth. Again, this is a direct contradiction of Matthew 16:18, where Christ promised to build his church and emphatically proclaimed that 'the gates of hell shall not prevail against it'. Jude 3 teaches that the faith was once for all, forever delivered unto the saints, and this was never to be repeated!

Thirdly, Mormonism is founded upon the destructive principle of continued revelation. Mormons contend that the Bible is insufficient, that it has been changed many times, and it is 'not translated correctly'. Their 8th Article of Faith states, 'We believe the Bible to be the Word of God as far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the Word of God'. Mormons will not tell you that there have been 3,913 changes from the original *Book of Mormon*, 1830 edition to the present 1978 edition. 1 Nephi 13:24-29 (Book of Mormon) says that 'many plain and precious parts have been taken from the Bible'. Therefore, *The Book of Mormon* is a complement and completion of the Bible. They subtly use Ezekiel 37:15-17 to teach this. The stick of Judah, supposedly, represents the Bible and the stick of Joseph represents *The Book of Mormon*, and just as the two sticks were to become one in the hand of Ezekiel, so the two books are to become one in our hand. To get the actual interpretation of these verses and refute this teaching, one must study the whole chapter in context, especially verses 20-22.

A comparison of their belief with the Bible is in order if we are to understand the Mormon mentality. They use biblical terminology, but have different meanings. The L.D.S. missionaries will tell you they believe everything you believe, only more! To say the least, this is a lie and a trick of the Adversary. An examination of Mormon beliefs will reveal a great gulf between them and biblical and historical Christianity.

The L.D.S. believe there are numerous Gods and God the Father, who is the head of the planet Earth, is just one among many. Lorenzo Snow, a former Mormon prophet, expressed this belief in the following poem:

Still tis no phantom that we trace
Man's ultimatum in life's race;
This royal path has long been trod
By righteous men, each now a God:

As Abra'm Isaac, Jacob, too,
First babes, then men-to gods they grew.
As man now is, our God once was;
As now God is, so man may be —
Which doth unfold man's destiny.

(*The Gospel Through The Ages*,
by Milton R. Hunter, p. 113)

In other words, God the Father was once a man on another planet, and because he lived such a good life, after the resurrection on that planet, he became a God. This will be looked at in more detail under the doctrine of salvation. They are definitely polytheistic!

Since God is nothing more than a glorified or 'exalted' man, he has a body of flesh and bones. The reason man was made in the image of God, man is flesh and bones; therefore, God has the same. They do not understand that the image of God is spiritual, rather than physical (Col. 3:10; Eph. 4:24). Such anthropomorphic expressions as, the hands, arms, eyes, ears and mouth of the Lord are used to substantiate this. Because God (and all Gods) has a body of flesh and bones, he is limited to time and space and cannot be everywhere at once.

How different is the glorious God of the Bible! There are not many Gods, but only one (Deut. 6:4; Isa. 43:10, 11, 44:6, 8, 45:6-22, 46:9; Mk. 12:29-32; Gal. 3:20; 1 Cor. 8:4-6; 1 Tim. 2:5; Ja. 2:19). Our great God has revealed himself in three Persons, each of whom is God, equal in essence, power, and glory. Yet there are not three Gods, but only one (Matt. 28:19; John 1:1, 2 and 14, 5:18, 20:28; Acts 5:3, 4; 2 Cor. 13:14; 1 John 5:7).

The L.D.S. have damnable beliefs concerning Christ. Jesus was the first-born son of God the Father and his wife, the mother God, in the pre-existence. Lucifer, probably the second-born, was the brother of Jesus.

We will pursue this subject in the next issue of *Reformation Today* in which I will show how far removed these and other Mormon teachings are from Scripture.

Deliverance from Meher Baba

The Testimony of Michael Craddick

The purpose of sharing my experiences is to encourage others. Sometimes we are tempted to think that there is very little hope for those who get caught up in the drug culture. From the age of about thirteen to twenty-two I was terribly mixed up, rebellious, sinful, drastic or extreme and ready to take up anything which came along and which seemed to have solutions. Deep in myself was the desire for certainty or reality. Unhappily I got caught up with drugs. The drug menace is a huge problem in American schools. From about the age of fifteen onwards for five years I used drugs regularly, sometimes daily. From my experience in drugs I have observed that very many who are involved in occult or eastern mysticism are given to some extent or other to drug taking. I had early received an impression that the church was hypocritical. That made me bitter. In addition to this, because I was lost and confused I was easily drawn into the mysticism of Buddhism. I read books about it and seriously practised meditation daily. One day when meditating I found myself involved in levitation, which is the lifting of one's body in the air without any scientific explanation. This was a terrifying experience. It scared me so much that I quit meditation immediately. I realised I was dealing with something I had no control over. At this time I was living in Washington DC and did not come from a practising Christian homelife so that there was no powerful restraint upon me in preventing me from following mystical practices.

At twenty I was introduced to the teaching of Meher Baba — an Indian teacher who died only recently. He claimed to be one

of the Messiahs and condoned all religions as viable pathways to God. He offered himself as the true means of making Hindus better Hindus, Muslims better Muslims and Christians better Christians! In Baba's reincarnationist theology such eclecticism can be justified through the belief that the soul evolves through a gaseous state to rocks, then to plants, then to animals and finally to man in its eternal quest to become one with God. This teaching keeps its followers uncertain, always guessing, because they can never be sure where they were before. There is also fear and bondage that your soul might revert back down the evolutionary ladder to become rock once again as a consequence of sin.

Baba drew together all his teachings in one major book which for those that seek without Biblical understanding appears to have all the answers. I felt that through the dogma I had seen the light at the end of the tunnel; I'd arrived! My long search was over. With other Baba disciples I zealously began to do 'good works' that included charitable gifts of food to tramps which ironically they were not always willing to accept.

Christians should not be afraid to speak clearly to misguided people. I was retrieved from my confusion in Babaism by an old friend who spoke very boldly to me. He was a jazz drummer who had been caught up in drugs with me in my earlier experience. He had become a Christian and happened to return to live in Washington DC. He wasted no time in reasoning with me. Very soon he launched an attack on Baba calling him a

liar. We spent many long nights discussing and disputing the claims of Baba and Christ. When I asked for proof he quoted a text which was the means of my deliverance from Babaism and, more important, contributed more than any other statement in Scripture to my conversion. The text was,

Salvation is found in no-one else for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12).

Now Baba taught that all religions were right. Here Peter the apostle claimed the exclusiveness of Christ; no other name anywhere in the universe; no other name among the societies of men; no other name for salvation. Moreover Jesus said in John 10 that all others were thieves and robbers. So then either Christ and his apostles were liars or Baba was a liar! Baba said many ways and many names were acceptable and that he came to make everyone better and to encourage them in whatever pathway they chose to take. Christ claimed the very opposite. He insisted that he was the *only* way to God, the *only* truth, and the *only* life (John 14:6). My friend not only reasoned with me but also contended with three of my friends who were living in the same house as myself. It is remarkable to note that on the same night they all came together to forsake the teachings of Baba.

From this point onwards all four of us began to associate with an occasional prayer meeting organised by the Roman Catholic charismatics. At one of these meetings a Roman Catholic missionary priest preached. While I cannot recall the material I remember that it was as though he knew me well and spoke very directly to my personal situation. I had been unable to cry for about five years but that night I was overcome emotionally and wept for some time. Afterwards I found that my three friends had been similarly affected, quite independently from myself, but simultaneously. This was our conversion.

Two of these friends went on to join a pentecostal holiness group but have now given that up because they were disillusioned with that form of Christian expression. At present they are seeking something more substantial which will answer their deep needs and be centred on God's glory. The other companion continued in the Roman Catholic circle and the last time I spoke to her she said she intended to become a member of the Roman Catholic church and desired to be a nun.

Having come to this point, we now believed that it was the time to burn our bridges behind us. We were repelled by the erroneous books that had misguided us and believed them to be Satanic. We felt that the glories of the gospel were such that you needed only one book. In my own experience I could see that to dispose of Baba's errors was a step forward but to actually trust in Christ and find salvation in him was a momentous advance. Essential in my conversion was a realisation of the wrath of Jehovah against us because of our sins. The realisation that God would not accept me in my self-righteous state was frightening and brought me to appreciate the atonement. I was now able to embrace the only sacrifice of Jesus of Nazareth and could see his pre-eminence and exclusiveness shining out as the only Christ, the only anointed one of God the Father. This gave me a strong repugnance for Meher Baba.

It was these convictions that brought us to the determination to burn all our books which were of a mystical nature. We could not bear the thought of them being used to mislead others. There were about one thousand books in the whole gamut of Eastern Mysticism. If we threw them into the garbage bin someone might retrieve them. In the end it took about a week to incinerate the books in our fireplace. A few of the newer text books which had commercial value we sold and used the money to buy Bibles for distribution.

Having come to attend the Charismatic prayer meetings, I became more involved with them and as a result steeped in their outlook and ways. I was prejudiced about mainstream denominations and regarded other evangelical meetings as straitlaced, boring and dull.

From my conversion in 1976 until leaving to settle in Israel in 1979 I did absorb basic evangelical truths but was not exposed to anything substantial or to the doctrines of grace until 1980. The formative influence in coming to accept the sovereignty of God came through group bible study in Israel. Like so many others I fought against these teachings about God's sovereignty but eventually, after fierce resistance, literally felt myself overcome by the consistency and authority of biblical truth. I found myself fighting against God. What J. I. Packer calls the antinomy, human responsibility and divine sovereignty; was the ultimate factor which brought my surrender. The battle was long. I was kept in terrific tension for about three months. The peace and freedom of spirit which

followed was a liberation all of its own. A further intense period of study followed in which I had to present material at a Bible study centre in Israel on the nature of revelation and authority of Scripture. For me this proved a deathblow to the Charismatic claims to the continuation of revelatory gifts or extra-biblical authority. I came to appreciate the finality and the all-sufficiency of Scripture. In this way I was introduced to writers like Herman Bavinck and Leon Morris. Morris refutes liberal theology with its claims that human intelligence is the final arbiter. By reading this I came to see that any authority that has human subjectivity as its foundation is unworthy and unreliable.

Of course I have a long way to go in the Christian life. Nevertheless much has been involved in my travelling through miry places and sinking sands to reach to the great foundation of Scripture (Ps. 40:1-5). It is only by building on the Word that we can fully honour the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. □ □ □

Experience

Piety and the Princeton Theologians. (A. A. Alexander, Charles Hodge and B. B. Warfield.) W. Andrew Hoffecker. Baker. 167pp.

Hoffecker presents a fine study of the piety of Archibald Alexander whose book on Religious experience (Banner of Truth) is an invaluable contribution to a grossly neglected area of our faith. Alexander is near to Jonathan Edwards in his grasp of revival, and rivals him in his discernment of experiences true or spurious. He warns of declension and spiritual apathy that sets in when excitements are not genuine (p. 29). He describes the great solemnity, silence, humbling, conviction of sin, and the justice of God in the condemnation of the sinner, experienced in true revival (p. 23).

The biography of Charles Hodge which follows is different in character, not as

intense from an experimental point of view but profitable in every way.

Outlined is much helpful material about B. B. Warfield the champion of inerrancy, and of Calvinism during a time when Liberalism was advancing like Hitler's panzer divisions and Reformed truth was on the retreat. It is easy to think of Warfield as a master of rational thought, an intellectualist *par-excellence*, rather than a devoted believer who was interested in religious feelings of love for God. Yet as Hoffecker shows Warfield delighted in recounting the spiritual experiences of Augustine, those of Edwards and the boyhood experiences of Charles Hodge. The subjective element in Calvin enabled Warfield to claim that the Genevan Reformer's theology epitomizes religion as dependence on God.

This is a welcome addition to the few books that exist on the subject of piety and experience. E.H.

Is the Bible really our only source of authority? What did they do before the canon of Scripture was recognised? What are the principles involved in Sola Scriptura — Scripture only? Bob Sheehan addressed this subject at the Carey Conference in January, the substance of which is now before you.

Sola Scriptura?

From where is a Christian to gain his knowledge of what he ought to believe and do? What is the rule of faith and life that he is to acknowledge? This question has vexed the church and has been variously answered throughout the centuries.

The Second century answer

In the writings of the Apostolic Fathers of the second century AD, four main sources of authority are found. In the first place, the Old Testament was highly revered. Dr. J. N. D. Kelly stated that, 'The importance of the Old Testament as a doctrinal norm in the primitive church cannot be exaggerated'.¹

Although the New Testament had not yet been collected together in a body of writings, those letters which either had apostolic authorship or were written in 'partnership' with the apostles were highly revered alongside Old Testament Scripture. This may be demonstrated by reference to the way in which the early writers quoted from and alluded to the New Testament writings. The second century church saw the apostolic testimony as a 'parallel doctrinal norm'² to the Old Testament forming a 'united witness'³ with it.

But the second century church did not confine apostolic authority to apostolic writings. Considerable stress was also laid on apostolic tradition.⁴ It was believed that the teaching of the apostles, which those who heard them recalled, was important to understanding the true Christian message. The contemporaries of the apostles such as those mentioned by Papias (c. AD 140) were considered very important because, as Papias wrote, 'I did not think that I could get so much from the contents of books as from the utterances of the living and abiding voice'.⁵ This oral apostolic testimony was assumed to be one and the same in content with the written testimony. It was an alternative expression of the same truth and not supplementary or corrective.

Second century Christians also recognised the role of prophecy and prophets, but they were seen as merely confirming the teaching already received. Ignatius saw no contradiction in writing, 'Be deaf, therefore, when anyone speaks to you apart from Jesus Christ',⁶ and on another occasion claiming, 'I cried aloud when I was among you. I spake with a loud voice, with the voice of God . . . it was the Spirit who kept preaching'.⁷ He would have been horrified, however, at the

suggestion that his inspired speech differed in content from the apostolic witness given. Not so the Montanists!

Montanism

Like main-line church thinking in the second century, Montanism affirmed that God had spoken authoritatively in the Old Testament, the apostolic writings and apostolic tradition. But it also believed that the imminence of the second coming required God's final prophets — the Montanists — to improve on the teaching given in Scripture by making its demands more rigorous.

Unlike the prophecy in the 'main-stream' church which was allegedly confirming and emphasizing apostolic truth, Montanist prophecy was superceding apostolic truth in specific areas of teaching. It claimed to give 'a higher revelation than that contained in the New Testament'.⁸ The latter days cried out for God to do a 'new thing' — Montanist prophecy was the 'new thing'. Therefore, Montanus claimed, 'I am the Lord God Almighty dwelling in man. It is neither angel nor ambassador, but I, God the Father, who am come'.⁹

The accusation of the then contemporary Church against the Montanists shows how they saw the principle at stake. The people of Phrygia who followed Montanus and his prophetesses were accused in this way, 'And being in possession of an infinite number of their books, the Phrygians are deluded. . . . They allege that they have learned something more through those than from the law, the prophets and the gospels. But they magnify those wretched women above the apostles and every gift of Grace, so that some of them presume to assert that there is in them something superior to Christ.'¹⁰

The Church in the following centuries

The understanding of authority gradually changed in the third to fifth centuries. Whilst the authority of the Old and New Testaments was vigorously affirmed and prophecy died out, the main area of change was in the attitude to apostolic tradition. The seeds of full blown Catholicism were sown in the redefinition of tradition, 'for it is in this that Romanism finds the authority for its distinctive doctrines'.¹¹

During the third and fourth centuries 'the basis of tradition became broader'.¹² Church writers began to write of the public and secret traditions of the church,¹³ to appeal to the church as a preserver and interpreter of truth¹⁴ and to authorize that which the early church writers approved.¹⁵ This last step was extremely significant because whereas the early writers had emphasized the distinction between themselves and the apostles, under the new order their opinions were quoted as authoritative and presumptively apostolic.

It is easy to see how these changes in emphasis made the church increasingly authoritative and removed the Scriptures from their supreme position. By the time of the Reformation theology had become a discussion of the opinions of the church fathers not of Scripture.

The Reformers and Puritans

Whilst it is increasingly popular to set the Puritans against the Reformers, in this area they were at one! The Reformed position was that faith and life, doctrine and practice, were to be regulated by Scripture alone and that the Spirit was tied to Scripture. 'This was the legacy passed on to Puritanism.'¹⁶

At Worms in 1521 Luther refused to accept the authority of the Church and tradition. 'He replied that unless he was proved wrong on the basis of Scriptures and sound reason, for popes and councils had erred and might err again, he was bound fast by his conscience to the Word of God.'¹⁷

In the same way Calvin vigorously opposed those who claimed to be prophets in his day speaking by inspiration of God, particularly the Anabaptists. Hence he argued, 'the office of the Spirit promised to us is not to form new and unheard of revelations . . . but to seal on our minds the very doctrine which the Gospel recommends. . . . They say that it is insulting to subject the Spirit, to whom all things are to be subject, to the Scripture: as if it were disgraceful to maintain a perfect resemblance throughout, and be in all respects without variation consistent with himself'.¹⁸ To Calvin the Spirit is subject to Scripture, his own word.

In opposing Quaker claims to leadings of the Spirit apart from the Word, John Owen, the Puritan stated that the Quakers diverged from the Puritans because the Puritans 'diligently try, examine and search into these things by the safe and infallible touchstone and rule of the Word'.¹⁹

The famous saying of John Robinson, the puritan pastor of the Mayflower Pilgrims, sums up the Reformed and Puritan position exactly. 'The Lord hath more truth and light yet to break forth out of his holy Word.'²⁰ More truth and light there is — our understanding is not yet perfect. But it will break forth out of the Word not apart from it. The Spirit works through the Scripture alone.

The Modern position

In the modern world all these positions have their advocates. Some uphold the Reformed and Puritan position, rejecting Church tradition and claims to prophecy. Others are neo-Montanists claiming a new thing for the last days moving their followers away from Scripture. Others abominate the idea of changing the teaching of Scripture yet still see a place for confirming and emphasizing prophecies. As the Reformed and Puritan view is the narrowest we will ask whether it is correct or inadequate.

Should we reject oral apostolic tradition?

The Reformers and Puritans were undoubtedly correct in rejecting oral apostolic tradition because such a tradition is impossible to verify. Even with the apostolic writings there was a problem of forgery which required Paul to place a distinctive mark in his authentic letters (2 Thess. 2:1-2, 5; 1 Cor. 16:21;

Gal. 6:11; 2 Thess. 3:17). The problems of truth orally transmitted are far greater, however.

If we think back to the last sermon we heard we recognize a certain difficulty in recalling what was said accurately. We may have understood but we may have misunderstood. As time passes memories fade and we become confused as to exactly what was said. Unaided human memory is a poor means of transmitting truth. How can the hearer of a second or third hand report have real confidence in it? We recognize the fact that the apostolic remembrance of the teaching of Jesus was Spirit-superintended (John 14:26) and on that basis alone we can have confidence in it.

In the case of oral apostolic tradition we do not have a second or third hand report of what was taught a few weeks after the event but reports passed on and restated decades and even over half a century after the event. This fact renders such reports unverifiable and probably, not possibly, unreliable.

Should we reject church tradition?

The Reformed and Puritan rejection of church tradition is important and necessary. This church tradition was largely based on the unstable foundation of the records of oral tradition and largely depended on the interpretation of the writings of the Apostolic Fathers. These fathers in turn show no great unanimity so that the views of one church father can be 'played off' against the views of another. Unstable truth of this sort is no truth at all.

Church tradition also arose out of the false view of the function of the church which is fundamental to Roman Catholicism. The church is considered the interpreter of all truth. Question eleven of the Catholic Truth Society catechism asks, 'How are you to know what God has revealed?' It answers, 'I am to know what God has revealed by the testimony, teaching and authority of the Catholic Church'.²¹ It gives as its proof text Matthew 28:19!

Whereas on the Catholic understanding the church is a manufacturer of truth, Biblically she only has the role of maintaining it (Matt. 28:18-20; Jude 3; 1 Tim. 3:15). In 1 Timothy 3:15 the church is described as the pillar and ground of the truth — that which supports and upholds. She has a role of maintenance not of manufacture, of service not production. For this reason her traditions have no authority if they are not Biblically authorized.

Should we reject all claims to prophecy?

Those who claim prophetic inspiration fall into two groups. Some (following the Montanists) see their prophecies as superior to former prophecy and superseding it. Others (following the claims of the second century church) argue that their prophecies are complementary not supplementary, and are a means used by God to emphasize particular areas of Scriptural truth and to apply that truth to particular situations. The first we shall call supplementary prophecy. The second shall be termed confirmatory prophecy.

Supplementary prophecy

The idea that there is a truth revealed that is supplementary to that given by our Lord and his apostles is a negation of the Biblical truth that the revelation given in our Lord Jesus Christ is final. The finality of the revelation given in the Lord is demonstrable on the grounds that our Lord is presented in Scripture as the one in whom the centuries of preparation find their fulfilment. He is the key to the Old Testament because its fulfilment is found in him (Luke 24:25-27, 44-45; Matt. 5:17-18; Deut. 18:15). Our Lord was not a conveyor of truth. He was truth incarnate (John 14:6).

The finality of the revelation given in Christ is further emphasized by the uniqueness and superiority of his person. No prophet (Heb. 1:1-2), angel (Heb. 1:3-3:4), leader like Moses (Heb. 3:1-6) or Joshua (Heb. 3:8) or High Priest or Levite (Heb. 7) could compare to him (Heb. 1:1-2). Others had received visions of God (Num. 12:6-8), but only the Lord had seen him and could expound him (John 1:18), because only the Lord was one with the Father (John 10:30). To have seen and heard Christ was to have seen and heard God (John 14:7f.). No greater sight of God is possible for man this side of eternity (John 14:7f.). Therefore no greater revelation can be given.

The giving of this final revelation in Christ was in two stages. Our Lord himself revealed the truth (John 12:49-50) but stated that there was more for him to reveal (John 16:12). This would be revealed by the Holy Spirit to the apostles when he came to remind them of the teaching they had already received (John 16:13; 14:26). It would still be our Lord's teaching which the Holy Spirit would reveal (John 16:13-15), not something supplementary.

The apostles were aware of having received such truth and were emphatically opposed to alterations and additions. Nowhere is Paul's cutting fury so unleashed as when he curses anyone, heavenly or earthly, who seeks to amend the Gospel (Gal. 1:6-9). His confidence in the truth of the Gospel is based on its revelation to him by Jesus Christ (Gal. 1:11-12). The truth of God is repeatedly seen as something once given through the Lord and his apostles (Jude 3; 2 Pet. 3:1-2; Heb. 2:1-4).

Supplementary prophecy by its very nature is an attack upon the person of Christ and a degrading of his work. The Reformers and Puritans were quite correct, therefore, to totally reject it.

Confirmatory Prophecy

Some advocates of confirmatory prophecy argue for it on the grounds that we are in the period of 'end-time shaking'.²² Prophecy is bringing 'the word of revelation and direction into living situations'.²³ It is argued that prophecy gives specific directions in particular situations whereas Scripture gives more general principles. It is strenuously affirmed that there is no difference in the truth received through Scripture and that received through prophecy. These are

complementary not supplementary. They are both inspired by the same Spirit. 'Though we have inspired writings we still need inspired utterances, and having the Word or revelation we still need the men of revelation. . . . There is an inspiration of the Holy Spirit other than that which produces Scripture. Because the same Holy Spirit inspires both there is full agreement and harmony between them.'²⁴

The implications of this view are clear. Scripture is inadequate to deal with particular problems. Clearer direction and guidance is needed. The inspired Word of revelation needs to be accompanied by inspired men of revelation. Revelation and inspiration, therefore, continue beyond Scripture.

In rejecting such a view the Reformers and Puritans were correct. They were correct because there is a vital connection between the cessation of prophecy and the completion of Scripture. The test of canonicity during the Old Testament period was prophetic authorship.²⁵ Some of the authors were 'more than prophets' like Moses (Num. 12:6-8), some were vocational prophets like Isaiah, and others were temporary prophets like David (2 Sam. 23:2) but all were prophets. The nature of their prophetic inspiration was the same. 'What was prophetic was regarded as the Word of God.'²⁶

The close of the Old Testament was recognized by the Jews as having happened only because prophecy had ceased. 'The chain of prophets evidently wrote a chain of histories from Genesis to Nehemiah, and the writings of these prophets were accepted, one by one, through the centuries until, when the Spirit of prophecy departed from Israel the canon was complete.'²⁷

The inter-testamental view is also entirely clear. The apocryphal books were rejected by the Jews because of their non-prophetic authorship. The Qumran community, and nationalist Jews, longed for the day when a prophet would again arise.²⁸

Our Lord himself, confirmed this view when he spoke of the significance of John the Baptist. 'For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John' (Matt. 11:13). Prophecy in Israel was to be found in only one place until John arrived—in the written word of Old Testament Scripture. Prophecy did not cease because Scripture was closed. Scripture closed because prophets ceased. When prophecy recommenced Scripture opened up again. By what authority do we argue that under the New Covenant a different order prevails? The presence of any prophecy jeopardizes the finality and sufficiency of Scripture.

The Reformers and Puritans were also correct to reject claims to prophecy on the basis of our Lord's teaching in John 13-17. Whilst those verses have a relevance to all Christians they have a primary significance for the apostles whom our Lord was addressing. Only they fulfil the requirements of the passage, that is we cannot be reminded of what our Lord said to us (John 14:26), because we never heard truth from his physical lips.

The apostles were promised in this passage an understanding of the truth that belongs to our Lord. The promised understanding was not to be partial but full. They were to be led unto *all* truth (John 14:26; 16:13-15). The 'all' of the passage is, of course, limited. It is not all truth in the sense of infinite truth but all of Christ's store of truth, i.e. the apostles would receive the whole body of knowledge that our Lord has for his church. If the apostles have faithfully passed this whole body of knowledge on to us we have all the truth we need. This being so the idea that Scripture is inadequate to deal with specific situations must be wrong. All truth is all truth and God's will shall be found in studying all truth as recorded in Scripture.

Paul's great statement on Scripture to Timothy is also of importance at this point (2 Tim. 3:16-17). The purpose of Scripture is stated as being the complete fitting out of the man of God for every good work (2 Tim. 3:17).

When a man has only a part of Scripture he is only partly fitted out for every good work but the possession of the whole Scripture requires a total equipment for every good work. All I need to know, I have in Scripture.

The Reformers view is perhaps best summed up by John Knox. 'When Knox was credited by his followers with prophetic gifts he replied: "My assurances are not marvels of Merlin, not yet the dark sentences of profane prophecies. But first the plain truth of God's Word, second, the invincible justice of the everlasting God, and third, the ordinary course of his punishments and plagues from the beginning are my assurances and grounds."²⁹

Mr. Knox's plain truth of God's Word has been the confidence of true Christians for hundreds of years. Let us by all means look for truth and light to break out of God's Word but let us not look elsewhere for guidance in faith and life.

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Can we trust the Bible?

Three books by Dr. James I. Packer.

God Has Spoken, Hodder and Stoughton, 1979, 159pp.

Under God's Word, Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1980, 159pp.

Freedom, Authority and Scripture, I.V.P., 1982, 61pp.

'Inspired,' 'infallible,' and 'inerrant' are three words used by evangelicals in speaking of the Bible. They have used them to express their belief in a wholly trustworthy Bible. This belief was held by such leaders as C. H. Spurgeon and J. C. Ryle in England, Louis Gaussen in nineteenth century Geneva, and the Hodges and B. B. Warfield in the U.S.A. Dr. Packer identifies himself with them. We wish to recommend these books to our readers in order to assist them in understanding the issues confronting us today. It is not our intention to review them in any detail.

During the last twenty years or so there has been considerable discussion among professing evangelicals about biblical authority. Some have suggested that the Bible is not entirely worthy of our trust. Dr. Packer puts the debate into a 24 page nutshell in chapter 2 of *Under God's Word*. As the discussion has been confined largely to the U.S.A. this chapter is valuable to readers outside America who need to be brought up-to-date on developments. The issues, however, are not simply the concern of our American brethren; they affect us all. Uncertainty, confusion or scepticism about the Bible and its authority leads to grave consequences for individual Christians and the whole church of Christ.

On the surface the debate appears to revolve around the word 'inerrant'. The

term is used to describe Scripture as totally and absolutely trustworthy. In other words it contains no inaccuracies of any kind whatsoever. Dr. Packer states his convictions about the matter this way,

I can make no sense — no reverent sense anyway — of the idea, sometimes met, that God speaks his truth to us in and through false statements by biblical writers, any more than I can make moral sense of Plato's commendation of the useful lie. (*Freedom, Authority and Scripture*, p. 51.)

The issues are wider however than the meaning of the term 'inerrant'. Dr. Packer repeatedly shows that what is at stake is our attitude to Scripture itself and therefore our attitude to the Lord Jesus Christ. If the Bible is not wholly true then how can it claim authority over us? The implications of this kind of approach are enormous. This is why *God Has Spoken* is an important book. Written originally for Anglicans he has now expanded it with a wider readership in view. In it he tells us what is the Bible's view of itself. It is explained fully in a clear, popular and therefore easily-read style.

The appendix of this book contains 'The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy', produced in 1978 and defining the historic evangelical position on Scripture in the light of the recent discussion. Readers who wish to pursue the matter in more detail may like to consult *Inerrancy*, ed. Norman L. Geisler, Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1980, 516pp. It contains fourteen papers presented at the conference which compiled that statement. Dr. Packer himself helped to draft it. As a statement it is well worth a careful study to clarify both what is and what is not meant by saying Scripture is *inspired*, *infallible* and *inerrant*.

The value of these three books lies in the basic conviction that permeates all he says. This quote from p.43 of *Freedom, Authority and Scripture* is typical.

Bowing to the Living Lord entails submitting mind and heart to the written Word. Disciples individually and churches corporately stand under the authority of Scripture because they stand under the Lordship of Christ who rules by Scripture. This is not

bibliolatry but Christianity in its most authentic form.

This is the way to understand the Bible — to be under its authority. For this reason we recommend these books for they help us to clarify our convictions and strengthen our commitment to Christ.

Films

Chariots of Fire

Chariots of Fire has been universally acclaimed as a wonderful film and now *Gandhi* is likely to be even more popular. *Chariots of Fire* is a moving account of how an Olympic athlete (Eric Liddell) refused to compete on the Lord's Day. The inspiration lies not in any Biblical teaching (for no single doctrine is clearly defined) but rather in the refreshing testimony of someone prepared to stick to his principles. Also the music is really stirring and catching. Apart from the doctrinal vacuum the film is positive but perhaps a little overloaded with trivia.

Gandhi

This multi-award winning film begins and ends with the assassination of Gandhi, but the account proper starts in South Africa where Gandhi, with outstanding courage that characterized his life throughout, contended tenaciously for civil rights for the Indian community. Throwing Gandhi out of a South African train for sitting in 'white' class, and then the agonizingly horrible Amritsar massacre, illustrate how single events can mightily illustrate great evils. And herein we have both the forte and fragility of the motion film media. Gross distortion is inevitable, as Rushdie in *The Times* asserts of the film, 'inade-

quate as biography, appalling as history' (2.5.83). How could we expect inclusion of the fact that in South Africa evangelicals gave both hospitality and truth to Gandhi? And how could it be otherwise than that the Amritsar tragedy should, with Dali-like surrealism, colour the whole of a 200 year rule by the British?

Selection requires the omission of so much that we need to know. We are not told about the devilish aspects of Hinduism, about the *brahmacharya* experiments, during which Gandhi would lie with young naked women all night to test his will to abstain. Nor is the fact that Nathuram Godse, who murdered Gandhi for defined political reasons, allowed exposure because that would spoil the drama of a mystical Christ-like martyrdom.

What we will have to be on our guard against is the use of this film by those who like the Bahai faith believe that all roads lead to God. That error destroys multitudes.

In spite of the omission and distortion factors the content is very thought provoking and we should use it as a talking point with our non-Christian friends, especially in facing the central issue of how can a man be justified before a holy God?

EDITORIAL

(continued from inside front cover)

sity. We also need to sustain our interest in humanity, not in a worldly way to be sure, but nevertheless with the help of photos, which are all too rare in Reformed journals and too few in this magazine for which we are sorry.

Donald MacLeod and the eldership

In the last issue of *Reformation Today* Charles Whitworth wrote in detail upon the personal qualities required for the office of elder. He suggested that all elders should preach, a position that is followed by the Brethren but which most Baptists and all Presbyterians reject. A presbyter is a synonymous term for 'bishop', 'elder' or 'pastor'. Yet most Reformed Baptists and all Presbyterians accept the distinction laid down in 1 Timothy 5:17 between ruling elders merely and those whose labour is preaching and teaching. In a helpful article on this subject Iain Murray (Banner of Truth No. 235) shows how the Puritans followed Calvin's idea of a three-fold office; ministers, overseeing elders, deacons; going on to outline the teaching of Charles Hodge and Thomas Smyth who maintained at length and in detail the difference and distinction of the two offices, overseeing elders and pastors or ministers. In contrast to this competent theologians such as Samuel Miller, R. J. Breckinridge, J. H. Thornwell and R. L. Dabney laboured to prove that there are essentially only two offices, deacons and elders, but that some elders are particularly called to labour in the word and preaching.

Summing up all the treatises written by the above named (the work by Smyth extended to 130 pages!). Thomas Witherow in 1873 affirmed that it was not possible to evade the fact that 'elder', 'bishop', 'presbyter' and 'pastor' are in the N.T. different names for the same office. This as we all know is especially clear in Acts 20 and Titus 1. Witherow strongly challenged an exaggerated distinction between two different types of elder saying that one text, namely 1 Timothy 5:17, was an inadequate basis for that theory.

Into this arena stepped Donald MacLeod at the 20th Leicester Conference. Taking for granted that we all know the positions outlined above, he sought to approach the subject with fresh light building his treatise on Acts 6, and coming in the end to this conclusion concerning elders:

1. Not all overseeing elders are called to labour in the Word and doctrine.

2. Those who are must give themselves wholly to it.
3. They must be trained.
4. It is imperative that the relationships and responsibilities of fulltime and preaching elders to the overseeing elders be clearly defined.
5. Making eldership a shibboleth is a great mistake.

While he did not assert it, this position (which is that of Thornwell, Dabney and most Reformed Baptists), is supported by the argument that 'able to teach' (*didaktikon* which appears only in 1 Timothy 3:2 and 2 Timothy 2:25) does not mean preach. The two references have nothing to do with public eloquence but can be applied to the refutation of gainsayers or catechising individuals. If the apostle had meant apt to preach (*kērugma*) he would have used that term.

Whilst sticking to the two-office only position (deacons, elders) of Dabney and Thornwell and most Reformed Baptists, very oddly MacLeod referred to a third category of 'preachers', those who may preach but who do not hold office. I trust that we are all flexible enough to allow for men who are gifted in teaching or preaching who nevertheless do not qualify as elders. What the N.T. does not encourage is a situation in which careful pastoring or oversight is divorced from proclamation and teaching. The third category mentioned by Donald did not spoil the excellence of his address but it was superfluous. Any assistance given to the church by any teachers or preachers must be under the unity and oversight of the eldership and in harmony with it.

By way of conclusion I would judge that most of us would disagree with Charles Whitworth's suggestion (and it was only a suggestion) of rotation preaching by all elders. In some churches that could prove a recipe for disaster for the simple reason that those assemblies accustomed to the centrality of preaching of a high order will simply not tolerate exchange of that priority or principle for another. The whole of Scripture (O.T. and N.T.) and the whole of Church history testifies to the fact that the power and vitality of the Church is dependent first upon preachers and preaching not rulers and ruling. The preaching priority is essential followed by the principle of harmony of that proclamation with oversight.

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Editor

ERROLL HULSE

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

Associate Editors

DAVID KINGDON

JOHN DAVISON, Scotland

JIM VAN ZYL, South Africa

WAYNE MACK, U.S.A.

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.

MALAYSIA AND
SINGAPORE

Good News Enterprise (cheques to NG GOOD CAM)

270, Jalan 18/2, Taman Sri Serdang,

Seri Kembangan, Selangor, Malaysia.

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,

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