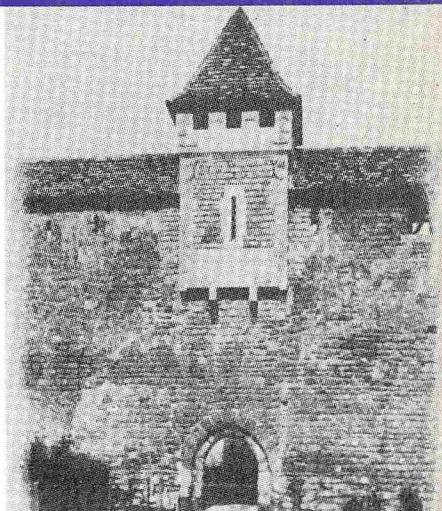


REFORMATION TODAY'83



Carey Conference News front inside cover

- 1 EDITORIAL
- 2 LUTHER – GOD'S MAN FOR THE HOUR *Editor*
- 11 THE HOLY SPIRIT AND ASSURANCE *David Kingdon*
- 17 STUDIES IN BIBLICAL THEOLOGY *Don Garlington*
- 21 MODERNISM IN REVIEW *Gwynne Lloyd Williams*
- 26 THE REFORMATION IN FRANCE *Sharon Hulse*
- 28 FRANCE – A WILDERNESS *David Ellis*
- 31 2ND AND 3RD DEGREE SEPARATION *Editor*

The Whitefield Fraternal back inside cover

THE CAREY CONFERENCE

THE CAREY FAMILY CONFERENCE, 1983

Every place was taken at the Carey Family Conference held at Elim Bible College, Capel, Surrey. The occasion was one of rich edification, excellent fellowship, stimulating discussion and splendid recreation. With regard to the holiday aspect an astonishingly warm and sunny English summer was a great help. Captained by the recreational leader, David Buxton, our Carey football team beat Elim on their home ground 3-1.

The spiritual materials are accessible and are now included in an up-to-date cassette catalogue which is available on request. The theme of the conference was 'Reformation and the Family'. We went to the very base of the Reformation in four sessions on Luther (see page 10) while the family considered Biblically was fully and powerfully set out by pastor Achille Blaize of Leyton in five addresses:

- 01CFC83 Marriage (58 min.)
- 02CFC83 The Family (62 min.)
- 03CFC83 The Biblical Education of our Children (70 min.)
- 04CFC83 Family Worship (and Discussion) (51 min.)
- 05CFC83 The Role of Women in the Church (61 min.)

Pastor Peter Buss of Guildford provided an instructive and stimulating address on the subject of Philip Henry (06CFC83 — Inspiration from the life of Philip Henry 43 min.).

Pastor Austin Walker of Crawley spoke on the doctrine of adoption (07CFC83 Aspects of Adoption 53 min.).

THE CAREY FAMILY CONFERENCE, 1984

Advance notice for your diary:

Carnegie College, Leeds, July 30th-August 4th, 1984

Speakers and subjects to be published later.

THE CAREY MINISTERS' CONFERENCE, 1984

January 10th-13th, 1984 — Swanwick, Derbyshire.

Pop Goes the Gospel by John Blanchard, Peter Anderson and Derek Cleave (E.P.) 158 pages, £1.95 has just been published. The validity of pop music in evangelism is examined. The authors claim that the use of pop music widens the generation gap in the church whereas the Bible encourages unity across the whole age range. They also claim that Gospel pop encourages a celebrity mentality. The Carey Conference will provide an opportunity to ply Peter Anderson with questions. For instance, how does he deal with the objection that the book deals with the worst aspects but not 'respectable Cliff Richard style pop'? Also is it not possible to deal more precisely and clearly with the whole question of worldliness, and the idea that we can attract people by using worldly means, that is, entertainment?

Don Carson of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois is due to speak on 'the challenge to encourage God's people in barren times' and Thom Smith of Oklahoma on, 'reckoning with our thorns, a condition for ministerial success'. Don Garlington of Durham, England, formerly New Jersey, U.S.A., will tackle the subject of producing a N.T. Biblical Theology. Keith Davies has undertaken to develop the subject, 'the life and being of a church', while John Benton is working on a title which will aptly describe his subject 'the theology of worship'. Other subjects including 'the challenge of unemployment' are being considered.

Editorial

Little did Luther realize that one day millions would be described by his name, much more so than John Calvin. Today however, the Lutheran Church in Germany is in a sad state, but hardly more so than the very small and weak Reformed churches of France. Before reading about the present state of that wilderness called France we are reminded of the vastly different situation that pertained there in previous times.

With the Reformation came the enormous problem of unity. How can we avoid fragmentation? Where are the legitimate points of division? The implications of infant baptism create a point of division because the whole nature of the church is affected by it. Luther found the issue of authority by personal inspiration (supersainthood) intolerable to live with. That is another point of division because men soon prefer their own inspiration to the authority of Scripture, and thereby overthrow the principle of *Sola Scriptura*. We should discourage all unnecessary division or division which arises from differences of culture of temperament or personality. Such division denies the unity of *believers* for which our Lord prayed in John 17, and the basis of unity outlined in Ephesians 4:1-6. Our already fragmented situation is not helped by the unbiblical practice of 2nd and 3rd degree separation. If we do not actually practise such separation it is possible to take up an aggressive attitude which is tantamount to it, an attitude illustrated by Luther's tragic stubbornness at the disputation at Marburg over the communion question. To Luther, Zwingli was simply an emissary of the devil. His attitude was absurd. To us today that whole saga seems ludicrous. But are we ourselves guilty of perpetuating needless divisions? The Whitefield fraternal is due to grapple with these issues on September 26th.

Bible College Libraries

Complimentary copies of Carey Books and case bound volumes of *Reformation Today* are sent to Bible College and Seminary libraries. The book on the French Huguenots by Janet Gray was located in a library in Zomba, Malawi (see p. 26). If you have details where the above mentioned materials will be well placed please send them to us.

Cover picture. Luther made Wittenberg famous. It was only a small town on the river Elbe. Wittenberg is now situated in East Germany which has a population of about 17 million. Today most of that nation (dominated by Russia) is surrounded by barbed wire. About half of the population professes to be Protestant and 7 percent Roman Catholic. The rest are secular. Free churches, mostly Baptist and Methodist, form about 1 percent of the population. These churches are growing. The picture on the cover shows the part of the walls of the city of Worms and the gate through which Luther passed on his way back from the historic occasion when he stood trial before the Emperor, Charles V.

More has been written about Martin Luther than any other man with the exception of our Lord. This is not surprising when we recall that Luther was God's instrument to bring to an end an era of thralldom, and signal the beginning of a new epoch. The 500th anniversary of his birth has focussed even more attention on the Reformation and its primary figure. Further aspects of Luther's life are here recalled and reflected upon. This follows the material by John Nicholls which appeared in 'R.T. 72'. Readers' attention is invited to the quotation in the notes which describes the ministry of Luther in the Roman Catholic Church today.

Luther – God's Man for The Hour

Luther was essentially a theologian, preacher and a pastor. Because he was involved in a titanic struggle to emancipate his people from papal tyranny he could not escape involvement in the major political issues of his day. In most of the political matters thrust upon him he fell far short of what we would expect from a Christian. Especially was this the case in his dealings with the peasants, the Anabaptists, and the Jews. This must be asserted even after full allowance for his being a child of his age.¹ But in his wielding of the Scripture he has no equal in German history. When we survey other nations it is difficult to find any leader to match the formative influence of Luther. He translated the Bible for his people, preached to them its message of justification by faith, provided much of their religious music, equipped them with catechisms, and gave them a model of home life. He also provided biblical exposition for them which forms most of the content of the 57 large volumes which came from his pen. From the age of 40 when he began until his death at 63, he produced on average a modest size book or treatise every fortnight. The number of pamphlets issued in Germany in the four years 1521 to 1524 exceeds the quantity for any other four years of German history until the present.² These were tracts illustrated with cartoons, not all written by Luther to be sure, but a work in which he took the lead. As for his books, whereas evangelical authors today would regard 10,000 copies of a book sold as encouraging, Luther's volumes were in demand up to 300,000 copies. His writing reflects his indefatigable zeal and prodigious output of work. Altogether he did the work of ten men. From 1512 to his death in 1546 he lectured in the university of Wittenberg expounding 13 books of Scripture during that period.

Special reference should be made to his marriage and home life. The ordering of his home was a model for others to follow. At 42 he married a nun, Katherine van Bora, aged 26. She bore six children. Luther derived immense comfort and joy from his family. Rich fellowship took place round the meal table, Luther being a most congenial conversationalist. Katie took in students to ameliorate their income so that together with hospitality extended to many visitors from other parts they were never short of company in their home.

The historical setting

Naturally when we think of Luther we think first of his battle with the Papacy.



Martin Luther — by Lucas Cranach the Elder, 1532

There is nothing in Scripture to support the idea of one sovereign spiritual and territorial ruler of the world. It took several centuries for that idea to crystallise. The demise of the Roman Empire left a vacuum. Many looked to the Church to fill it. We should note well that at the time of the Council of Nicea (325) there were six centres of church rule, not one.³ Gradually one power emerged which began to claim complete control, spiritual and civil, over all men.

During the 10th century the Papacy sank to the depths of degradation unequalled up to that time. Later, just prior to Luther, there reigned Pope Alexander VI who gave every support to his son Caesar Borgia's ambition to be heir to the papal chair. It is believed that Borgia murdered over 100 people including his own brother, caused his own brother-in-law to be strangled in his presence, and actually knifed Alexander's favourite, Peroto, in the Pope's own arms, blood spurting over the papal robes.⁴

Leo the 10th was pope when Luther nailed his 95 theses on the door of the castle church at Wittenberg in 1517. Leo was given to self-gratification, laziness and pleasure-seeking. He delighted in rich banquets. He was absorbed in gaining revenues to sustain his power and profligate pleasures as well as building a new St. Peter's in Rome. To assist the gain of income Leo encouraged the sale of indulgences. These consisted in assurances of the release of those in the agony of purgatory. Depending on your rank or station in life you could buy your relatives or friends out of the fires. A Dominican monk by the name of Tetzel was a well known salesman who employed his eloquence to extricate as much money as possible for the coffers of the papacy.

'Listen,' he would say to the crowds, 'Listen to the voices of your dear dead relatives and friends, beseeching you and saying, "Pity us, pity us. We are in dire torment from which you can redeem us for a pittance." Do you not wish to? Open your ears. Hear the father saying to his son, the mother to her daughter, "We bore you, nourished you, brought you up, left you our fortunes, and you are so cruel and hard that now you are not willing for so little to set us free. Will you let us lie here in flames? Will you delay our promised glory?"'

Remember that you are able to release them, for

As soon as the coin in the coffer rings,
The soul from purgatory springs.

Will you not then for a quarter of a florin receive these letters of indulgence through which you are able to lead a divine and immortal soul into the fatherland of paradise?"⁵

The idea of lessening penances by payment of money goes back to the 7th century but it was in 1300 when a Jubilee year was celebrated at Rome that the system of indulgences really got underway. Large amounts of money were raked in as they were deposited on the supposed tomb of St. Peter. This led to more frequent special occasions on which to gather cash for indulgences.

It was error and corruption of this kind which provoked Luther's indignation. The indulgences were part and parcel of a whole system of merit which was supposed to be treasured up in the storehouses of Rome and dispensed to the people. Salvation was conceived of as something you worked for piece by piece. Merit was accrued and preserved through the ministry of the Church, especially by means of seven sacraments which Luther reduced to three (baptism, the supper and penance). Later he and the other reformers accepted the basic two.

One means of gaining merit or relief from purgatory was to view relics. Luther's governor or prince was Frederick the Wise. He worked hard to build up a museum full of relics. By 1520 there were 19,013 holy bones in the collection. Prized among the relics was a strand from Jesus' beard, a piece from the stone from which our Saviour ascended, a twig from Moses' bush, one tooth from the jaw of St. Jerome and three parts of the cloak of the virgin Mary. If viewed on a certain day, and if accompanied by handsome money gifts, extended relief could be obtained from the fires of purgatory.⁶

Clear Biblical teaching had been overgrown by a mixture of human reason and philosophy. A man by the name of Thomas Aquinas (1226-74) had produced a literature almost as copious as Luther's. Aquinas' theological system owed much to the Greek philosopher Aristotle. He blended faith and reason and followed the idea that you can prove God by studying cause and effect.⁷ Mysticism which placed great importance on feelings was very popular. The Church was thoroughly confused as to the way of salvation. It was from this confusion that Luther was used to rescue God's people.

In doing so he was assisted by a movement of learning called the Renaissance, a revival of scholarship. We must admire the wonderful providence of God that at the very time of Luther's spiritual awakening a distinguished German scholar John Reuchlin made available the necessary Hebrew grammar while the text of the New Testament Greek was published in 1516 by Erasmus. The discovery of the printing press was an indispensable aid to the Reformation.

In Luther's day people did not think of themselves as citizens belonging to France or England, Germany or Spain, so much as belonging to the Holy

Roman Empire. In our Lord's day the world from Iraq to Northern England formed an Empire under a Caesar at Rome. It was all pagan but gradually this Roman Empire was Christianized. It was called 'Holy' but was very far from being holy. Indeed it became spiritually corrupt from the top down with only pockets here and there of genuine spiritual fervour and faithfulness.

From intense darkness to glorious light

At the very heart of the reformation lay Luther's experience of salvation.

Melanchthon said that Luther's eyes were like those of a lion or falcon. One of his students said they sparkled and burned like stars so that one could hardly bear looking at them.⁸ Behind those eyes lay not only an intellect of exceptional powers but a personality which was warm and magnetic. Added to this he possessed a brilliant memory and a will of extraordinary determination. These unusual gifts were brought to their best by the fires of deep and prolonged spiritual experience. Luther's resolute willpower nearly killed him as he tried to gain salvation by means of the Roman merit system. It was not the reformer's genius which penetrated the maze of medieval theology to discover that it is imputed righteousness alone which justifies. To the Holy Spirit himself must be attributed the illumination of Luther's understanding.

Staupitz, the vicar of the Augustinian monastery, was baffled by the young monk, so disturbed and so enormously exercised about salvation. Staupitz' counsel helped but did not solve the persistent deep-rooted problem. A way had to be found. One day under the pear tree in the cloister garden Staupitz informed Luther that he was to take the chair of Bible teaching in the university. This involved a huge volume of work. Staupitz was rightly convinced that it would benefit brother Martin and serve to direct his mind to the best source of help, namely, the holy writings.

It must surely be unique, even in the Roman Catholic Church, for an arch God-hater to be rewarded with such a privileged position of foremost Bible Teacher in a leading University. Can we really say Luther was an arch God-hater? Well let us see what happened.

As an unconverted priest Luther was in the darkness of medieval superstition. Unlike today the people did not doubt the reality of the supernatural world. It was however a confused concept, a turmoil between God and the Devil and saints and demons. The problem was how to gain favour with God, how to achieve enough and earn salvation. Of the monastery Luther said that: 'I plagued myself with prayers, fastings, wakings and freezings that I almost died of cold. Sometimes I would lock myself up for two or three entire days at a time without food or drink.' He fasted, prayed, chastised and tormented his body, 'that I might remain obedient and live chastely'.⁹ But it was not a battle over women. 'In the convent I thought neither of money nor of the wealth of this world nor of women.'¹⁰ A celibate life is an utter curse to those not so gifted. This often led to appalling and unspeakable immoralities. St. Benedict rolled his body in thorns to quell lust and St. Cuthbert stood all night up to his neck in

the ghastly cold North Sea off the coast of Northumberland to subjugate the flesh, but Luther cheerfully remarked once, 'Women never bothered me. I was always concerned with the really knotty problems.'¹¹

Many have attempted to pinpoint a crisis experience in Luther's conversion, but that is not possible. He moved forward through storm after storm. Each overlapping phase ended in failure. The young monk tried salvation by confession of sin but could never be satisfied that he had remembered everything. Staupitz became impatient with the scruples of a sick soul, 'Look here,' he explained, 'if you expect Christ to forgive you, come in with something to forgive — parricide, blasphemy, adultery — instead of all these peccadilloes!'¹²

Staupitz, like Muggeridge in our day, was a mystic. He believed in the whole penitential system plus mysticism. Catholicism is elastic. The mystical idea is to cease striving and sink down into the ocean of God's love. Of course you have a lifejacket but the idea is to float luxuriously. But this approach did not work for Luther for God was angry, judging, damning, and Christ was sitting on a rainbow consigning the damned to the flames of hell. Luther did not find refuge in a floating paradise but fled to Mary and 21 saints whom he had selected to be his patrons, three for each day of the week.

But then monk Martin was wrestling not only with an angry God justly offended, he was struggling with a sovereign Jehovah who predestinates some to salvation and passes by others. This is how he expressed it later: 'Is it not against all natural reason that God out of his mere whim deserts men, hardens them, damns them, as if he delighted in sins and in such torments of the wretched for eternity, he who is said to be of such mercy and goodness? This appears iniquitous, cruel, and intolerable in God, by which very many have been offended in all ages. And who would not be? I was myself more than once driven to the very abyss of despair so that I wished I had never been created. Love God? I hated him!'¹³

Staupitz was baffled. A way must be found. It was then that the vicar informed brother Martin that he should study for his doctor's degree, undertake preaching and take the chair of Bible at the university.

So in August 1513 Luther commenced his lectures on the book of Psalms. From there he moved to Romans, then Galatians and then Hebrews. For Luther this Bible study was his Damascus Road, his new birth, his evangelical enlightenment. His actual experience of salvation took place in about 1514 when he wrestled with the meaning of the word righteousness. 'Then I began to comprehend the "righteousness of God" through which the righteous are saved by God's grace, namely, through faith; that the "righteousness of God" which is revealed through the Gospel was to be understood in a passive sense in which God through mercy justifies man by faith, as it is written, "The just shall live by faith." Now I felt exactly as though I had been born again, and I believed that I had entered Paradise through widely opened doors.'¹⁴

Soon Luther realised that the Scriptures are to be interpreted in their grammatical and historical sense and he abandoned the old method of imposing allegorical ideas upon the passages. We should admire the providence of God in directing Luther first to the Psalms, which approximated to his experience; then Romans, which provided him with the foundations of justification by faith; then Galatians, which is a manifesto for reformation and liberation from intolerable additions to the Gospel; and finally Hebrews which gave him his Christology, without which he could not be mighty in his God. The reformer was a giant in his understanding of the person and work of Christ and the all-sufficiency of that work. Even by the time you reach Hebrews 1:3 you are confronted by the One who purged us of our sins in one sacrificial action. What then are we to say about the whole purgatorial system of Rome, not to mention the perpetual additions by way of the mass to that one perfect sacrifice of Christ?

Three decisive reformation events

Following this experience, conflict with the Papacy and its system was inevitable. The subsequent events can, for the sake of study, be simplified by focussing on three main events:

1. The nailing of the 95 theses to the door of the Castle Church in 1517.
2. The burning of all Papal laws and decretals as well as the Pope's bull of excommunication, 1520.
3. Luther's uncompromising stand before Emperor Charles V at Worms in 1521.

The fixing of the 95 theses to the door of the castle church was in itself nothing unusual for that was the custom of the times in announcing a matter of debate. It was however God's hour. Martin Luther was God's man for this hour. The German nation was ready for it. News of the protest spread like wild fire. The main thrust of the theses was against the exploitation of the people by means of indulgences to fill the coffers of Rome. Luther stressed fervently the spiritual harm done by the indulgences. Written in Latin, the theses were designed to invite a dispute among theologians. The Press of that day translated them into German, and distributed them far and wide. Luther had pulled the rope which rang the bell which awoke the world from a thousand years of sleep.

Made famous overnight, the reformer was now looked to for leadership. He was summoned to answer for his actions at Rome, but Frederick secured for him a hearing at Augsburg before Cardinal Cajetan. This ordeal Luther survived quite well. Nothing decisive came out of it. During 1519 Luther was obliged to engage in a public disputation with Eck, Rome's Goliath in the arena of public debate. Eck soon exposed the extent of the reformer's deviations from Rome and compelled him to come right out into the open concerning his *Sola Scriptura* position. According to Luther not only the popes but even General Councils of the Church were subject to error. Scripture alone was trustworthy. Soon Luther was associated and aligned with John Hus who had been martyred 100 years earlier. Would he, Luther, have any more hope of survival than Hus?

Had it not been for the firm protection afforded him by the German princes and knights he would surely have perished. Before going to account for himself before Cardinal Cajetan he confessed that he fully expected to be burned at the stake.

By now the battle was white hot and Luther's pen moving with mercurial rapidity. One treatise called upon the Germans to reform the Church exposing the false claims of Rome. Another book expounded the true nature of the sacraments as against their abuse by Rome. Yet another (and all three were written and published in 1520), expounded the doctrine of justification by faith and the priesthood of all believers. These publications sold in large numbers. Leo X was shocked into action and issued a papal decree excommunicating the Augustinian friar. Luther's reaction was both characteristic and symbolic. A pile of wood was gathered just outside the east gate of the city. It was the place where pest-infected clothing was burned. The doctors and masters and student body of the university gathered to witness the ceremonial burning. Only after the *Corpus iuris canonici*, the whole body of papal canon law, represented by several large slow burning volumes, had been consigned to the flames, did Luther draw from his gown the papal bull of excommunication. He threw it into the flames with the words, 'Because thou hast destroyed the truth of God, may the Lord consume thee in these flames!'

This was an act so dramatic and radical as to be unparalleled. What is far more significant is the fact that Luther first burned all the papal canon laws and decretals which formed the foundation of the papacy. It was a conflagration of the entire body of presumptuous and extravagant laws built up through the centuries to give power to the pope. This was the basic framework on which the papacy was built, the burning of which symbolized the end of the medieval ascendancy of the Church. We see here the end of an ever increasing volume of tradition which made void the Word of God. Divorce from Rome, the Curia and the papacy was proclaimed by that fire.¹⁵ These canon laws were used like thunder and lightning to terrify and tyrannize doubters or waverers. Dreadful anathema, possible death awaited those who failed to expel Luther, irrespective of rank or class. But the news of their destruction by fire brought fresh courage to all supporters of the reformation.

The following year saw the historic appearance of the reformer before Charles V supported by his illustrious court in full session. The story is well known. At his first appearing Luther seemed overawed and asked for time to consider the momentous questions put to him, namely, firstly are these books written by you (about 20 were arrayed on a table)? and, secondly, are you prepared to retract these books and their contents? Some misconstrued Luther's caution and restraint as weakness and anticipated his recantation.

The next day was more auspicious than the first. There was standing room only in the largest auditorium that could be found. When the time came for Luther to respond he did so with his clear baritone ringing voice explaining and expounding his writings.

To the monk's eloquence Eck responded, 'Martin, you have not sufficiently distinguished your works. The earlier were bad and the latter worse. Your plea to be heard from Scripture is the one always made by heretics. You do nothing but renew the errors of Wyclif and Hus. How will the Jews, how will the Turks, exult to hear Christians discussing whether they have been wrong all these years! Martin, how can you assume that you are the only one to understand the sense of Scripture? Would you put your judgment above that of so many famous men and claim that you know more than they all? You have no right to call into question the most holy orthodox faith, instituted by Christ the perfect lawgiver, proclaimed throughout the world by the apostles, sealed by the red blood of the martyrs, confirmed by the sacred councils, defined by the Church in which all our fathers believed until death and gave to us as an inheritance, and which now we are forbidden by the pope and the emperor to discuss lest there be no end of debate. I ask you, Martin — answer candidly and without horns — do you or do you not repudiate your books and the errors which they contain?' Luther replied, 'Since then Your Majesty and your lordships desire a simple reply, I will answer without horns and without teeth. Unless I am convicted by Scripture and plain reason — I do not accept the authority of popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other — my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. God help me. Amen.'

The earliest printed version added the words: 'Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise.' The words, though not recorded on the spot, may nevertheless be genuine, because the listeners at the moment may have been too moved to write.

Luther had spoken in German. He was asked to repeat in Latin. He was sweating. A friend called out, 'If you can't do it, Doctor, you have done enough.' Luther made again his affirmation in Latin, threw up his arms in the gesture of a victorious knight, and slipped out of the darkened hall, amid the hisses of the Spaniards, and went to his lodging. Frederick the Wise went also to his lodging and remarked, 'Dr. Martin spoke wonderfully before the emperor, the princes, and the estates in Latin and in German, but he is too daring for me.'¹⁶

In the event Frederick did stand by Martin. Two out of the six German electors refused to endorse Luther as a heretic. This division ensured the future of the reformation. At the same time our freedom was preserved for without such a deliverance who is to say that the papal octopus would not have grown more dominant to stifle Biblical Christianity forever?

Notes

Roland H. Bainton's life of Martin Luther with the title *Here I Stand* should be compulsory reading for every literate Christian. Mentor have kept this work in print as a small paperback. Its size is deceptive because the 300 pages are packed with information and exciting reading. E. G. Schwiebert's biography of 890 pages is extremely valuable. Published by Concordia it accords with their high standards. I prefer Schwiebert to Richard Friedenthal but would not part with the latter (560 pp Weidenfeld and Nicholson). We are indebted to Marshall, Morgan and Scott for keeping James Atkinson's study of Luther in print (352 pp, £5.95). Title: *Martin Luther and the Birth of Protestantism*. This appeared first in 1968. The new edition, 1982, has a 27 page foreword which brings us up to date with regard to the scholars and their research on Luther. Concerning the Church of Rome today this is what it says:

'The educated Roman Catholic of the Western democracies is growing away from the traditional Catholic position. Educated Catholics by and large no longer hold the doctrine of transubstantiation, no longer believe the immaculate conception nor the assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, no longer go to regular confession, and certainly do not follow the line on birth control and sexual ethics. Admittedly, the uneducated Catholics of Latin America and the Third World, to some extent most of the Catholics of those traditionally Catholic countries of Europe who have hardly met Protestantism as a spiritual and intellectual movement, receive uncritically the Catholic view, including those on birth control and sexual ethics. Consequently, a polarisation is emerging in the Roman Catholic world between a sceptical intelligentsia and a superstitious underworld. It is precisely in such a situation that a concerned look at one of the great Catholic scholars and preachers, Martin Luther, whose sole

aim was to restore his deeply loved Catholic Church to its biblical basis and its rightful message and mission, could effect the greatest *aggiornamento* known to the Roman Catholic Church. If at the same time Protestantism could bestir itself and terminate its suffocating liaison with liberalism, deliver itself from its crippling intellectual and moral permissiveness, and free itself from the seductions of secularisation and politicisation, in order to see again and hear again what the Reformation was calling men back to say, to be and to do, all of us, together, may yet hear what the Spirit is saying to the Churches, and in hearing, obey. Doctor Luther is a doctor of the Church: he has more to teach us than any other teacher, save Christ.'

Footnotes

- ¹ Bainton, pp. 214-216, 295-297.
- ² Bainton, p. 238.
- ³ Schwiebert, p. 12.
- ⁴ Schwiebert, p. 29.
- ⁵ Bainton, p. 59.
- ⁶ Bainton, p. 53.
- ⁷ Atkinson, p. 38ff.
- ⁸ Schwiebert, p. 576.
- ⁹ Schwiebert, p. 150.
- ¹⁰ Schwiebert, p. 154.
- ¹¹ Atkinson, p. 102.
- ¹² Bainton, p. 41.
- ¹³ Bainton, p. 44.
- ¹⁴ Schwiebert, p. 286.
- ¹⁵ Friedenthal, p. 249.
- ¹⁶ Bainton, p. 143ff.

Cassettes

Four addresses on Luther were given by the editor at the recently concluded Carey Family Conference as follows:

1. Martin Luther — the man and reformation today, 69m (08CFC83).
2. Luther's experience of justification by faith, 57m (09CFC83).
3. Luther and the authority of Scripture (this includes an exposition on apostleship and deals with Luther's response to the one who swallowed the Holy Spirit, feathers and all!), 67m (010CFC83).
4. Luther and the life of faith (which includes an analysis of the reformer's mistakes), 68m (011CFC83).

These cassettes cost £1.65 each or can be hired at 60p per cassette per month which includes postage one way in the UK. Write to Mr. S. D. Hogwood, 13 Lucastes Avenue, HAYWARDS HEATH, West Sussex RH16 1JE.

The Holy Spirit and Assurance

by David Kingdon

Any proper consideration of the doctrine of assurance brings us into the sphere of experimental or practical theology and, inevitably, we shall be confronted with a number of issues about which there has been and continues to be lively discussion. However, our concern in this article is with the Holy Spirit and assurance, that is with the nature and manner of his operations in bringing an assurance of sonship to the believer in Christ. In addition to the direct teaching of Scripture on the subject, we shall also draw on the rich mine of Puritan exposition on the subject of assurance, since the Puritans as masters of experimental theology gave it a great deal of attention.

Definition of Assurance

We must begin by *defining assurance*, otherwise our subsequent discussion will lack clarity. Now we must distinguish between two things. It is one thing to believe that Christ died for sinners; it is another to be persuaded of my own personal interest in his death. It is one thing to believe unto salvation; it is another thing to *know* that I have eternal life. Hence the apostle John writes to those who believe in the name of the Son of God, that they may *know* that they have eternal life (1 John 5:13). Quite clearly *believing* and *knowing* are distinguishable, and the former does not automatically involve the latter, otherwise there would have been no point to John's statement.

Assurance, then, has to do with the believer's *persuasion* that he is one of God's sons (Rom. 8:14-16) and that he has eternal life (1 John 5:13). It is brought about by the testimony of the Holy Spirit who bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.

Dr. James Packer has pointed out that 'Assured faith in the New Testament has a double object; first, God's revealed truth, viewed comprehensively as a promise of salvation in Christ; second, the believer's own interest in that promise. In both cases, the assurance is correlative to and derived from divine testimony.'

God first testifies that the Gospel is true, by means of miracles and the charismata which authenticated the apostles as his messengers (Heb. 2:4). However, since signs do not in and of themselves create faith, for otherwise all who saw the miracles which Jesus performed would have believed (but see Matt. 11:20-24), the Holy Spirit must also work within men so that, being illuminated, those who hear the Gospel are enabled to recognize and receive the message preached by the apostles. Only when the Holy Spirit works is the word of God accepted 'not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of

God' (1 Thess. 2:13 cf 1:5). In other words, unless the Holy Spirit testifies to the word of the Gospel in the human heart there can be neither a conviction that the Gospel is true nor faith in the One who is the subject of Gospel proclamation.

However, if the believer is to come to an assurance of his sonship, if he is to be persuaded of his 'saving interest' in Christ, to use William Guthrie's phrase, then a second work of testimony is necessary. God must testify by his Spirit that believers are his sons. He must bear witness with our spirit that we are children of God (Rom. 8:16). Without this second work of testimony the believer would be without assurance, without the settled conviction that by grace he belongs to God's family and is destined to be glorified with Christ (Rom. 8:17).

No-one, of course, becomes a believer without the first work of testimony, but it is possible to be a believer and to lack the second, or more precisely, to lack the assurance which it is the work of the Holy Spirit to bring about in the hearts of God's children. Thomas Brooks, with his usual succinctness, puts this distinction thus: 'It is one thing for me to have grace, it is another thing for me to see my grace; it is one thing for me to believe, and another thing for me to believe that I do believe; it is one thing for me to have faith, and another thing for me to know that I have faith.'² Thus it follows that 'A man may be a true believer, and yet would give all the world, were it in his power, to know that he is a believer.'³

Brooks defines assurance in the following way: 'assurance is a reflex act of a gracious soul, whereby he clearly and evidently sees himself in a gracious, blessed, and happy state; it is a sensible feeling, and an experimental discerning of a man's being in a state of grace, and of his having a right to a crown of glory; and this rises from the seeing in himself the special, peculiar, and distinguishing graces of Christ, in the light of the Spirit of Christ, or from the testimony and report of the Spirit of God, 'the Spirit bearing witness with his spirit, that he is a son, and an heir apparent to glory, Rom. 8:16, 17'.⁴

Thomas Watson's view of assurance relates together the Word of God, the testimony of conscience and the testimony of the Holy Spirit in a syllogism. 'Assurance consists of a practical syllogism, in which the word of God makes the major, conscience the minor, and the Spirit of God, the conclusion. The Word says, 'He that fears and loves God is loved of God'; there is the major proposition; then conscience makes the minor, 'But I fear and love God'; then the Spirit makes the conclusion, 'Therefore thou art loved of God'; and this is what the apostle calls 'The witnessing of the Spirit with our spirits, that we are his children. Rom. 8:16.' (*A Body of Divinity*, revised edition 1970, Banner of Truth, p. 251.)

New Testament teaching on Assurance

Having defined assurance, we must now examine the teaching of the New Testament about the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing about a state of

assurance within the believer's heart. Since Romans 8:16 lies at the very centre of that teaching we shall concentrate our attention upon it.

Internality of the Spirit's testimony. The work of the Spirit in assuring the believer of his sonship is *internal*. It is a witness *with* our spirit that we are children of God. It is thus a witness within our consciousness that we belong to the family of God. It is a testimony which is felt and experienced within us. It is not the objective testimony of the Word of God, but the subjective testimony of the Holy Spirit. This is not to say that the subjective testimony of the Spirit is to be divorced from the objective testimony of the Word of God, since the Holy Spirit is the author of both, and as such he cannot contradict himself for he is the Spirit of truth. So the testimony of the Spirit to our spirit that we are sons of God will always be grounded on the Word of God. It will always be according to Scripture for, as Thomas Brooks insists, 'The Spirit never loosens where the Word binds, the Spirit never justifies where the Word condemns, the Spirit never approves where the Word disapproves, the Spirit never blesses where the Word curses.'⁶

Nonetheless it is not the Word as such that witnesses with our spirits, but the Spirit. The Word supplies the grounds for assurance, and it is the standard by which any claim to have assurance is to be tested, but it is the Spirit himself who subjectively bears witness with our spirits that we are children of God.

Assurance, then, is an internal work of the Spirit, just as regeneration is. As such it is therefore secret and unobservable, for it is performed within the hidden depths of our consciousness. Yet quite clearly it is known and experienced by the believer otherwise it would be inappropriate for Paul to write that the Spirit bears witness *with* our spirit. This witness must be known by the believer within himself otherwise the thought of the apostle is without meaning.

The immediacy of the internal witness of the Spirit. In the second place, Paul teaches that the assurance of our sonship is a distinct and immediate testimony borne by the Holy Spirit. As such it is to be distinguished from any witness borne by our conscience that we have within us the marks of sonship. Conscience, as we have already seen in the quotation from Thomas Watson, may well be persuaded that in us are to be found the evidences of sonship. We may well have within ourselves encouraging signs of a true work of grace. However, our text goes beyond the witness of a good conscience, for it speaks of the Holy Spirit witnessing with our spirits that we are children of God. Clearly, as Robert Haldane points out, this witnessing is more than a helping of our conscience to bear its witness to our renewed state, for if this only were meant by the apostle, the Holy Spirit 'could not be said to be a witness himself, even another witness besides the conscience, which the text asserts'.⁷ Assurance of sonship results when there is not merely the witness of conscience alone, but the *concurrent* witness of conscience *and* the Holy Spirit.

The content of the Spirit's testimony. Thirdly, the *content* of the testimony of both the Holy Spirit and our spirit is the assurance of our sonship. The Spirit of adoption (Rom. 8:15) is, I believe, the Holy Spirit himself (so A.V.), and not the attitude of filial love towards, and confidence in, God as our Father which results from our adoption into his family (so R.S.V.; N.A.S.V.). My reason for thinking that the Spirit of adoption is the Holy Spirit himself is that in the closely parallel passage in Galatians 4:6 there can be no other conclusion drawn than that the Holy Spirit himself is meant. There Paul says: 'And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"' The Spirit of God's Son is, of course, one and the same with the Spirit of God, as Romans 8:9-11 makes clear. It is, therefore, certain that we must take 'the spirit of sonship or adoption' as referring to the Holy Spirit himself. Now, since he is the Spirit of adoption, he only dwells within those who have been graciously adopted into God's family. Furthermore, since he is the Spirit of Christ, the Son, he causes the believer to cry out to the Father as the Son did in the days of his flesh, 'Abba! Father!' (*cf* Mk. 14:36).

It is obvious that there is a close connection between the work of the Holy Spirit in creating within the children of God that filial love and confidence which bursts forth in the cry 'Abba! Father!' and his ministry of assuring such that they are, in fact, members of God's family. For it would be unthinkable if he who creates such filial love and confidence should stop short of witnessing that believers are the children of God. In other words, there is a close link between that communion with the Father which the Spirit brings about, and the assurance of sonship. Such intimacy with the Father as the cry 'Abba' indicates ought to involve as well the clear persuasion that we are children of God. Yet there is nevertheless a distinction to be observed. The cry 'Abba, Father' is the witness given by our filial consciousness, whereas the Spirit's witness is *to us*, and to the effect that we are children of God.

That we are children of God is a marvel to make angels wonder, we who by nature were children of wrath. That we can in this life, within these mortal bodies, be assured that we are, such as we are, in God's family, is heaven on earth begun. Assurance is, says Brooks, 'a suburb of heaven'. And that we are not only children, but heirs, and fellow heirs of Christ is the marvel of all marvels, for it is grace most amazing for the Father to bestow upon us all that he settled upon Christ.

To keep us from knowing the blessedness or assured sonship the Devil will use his most subtle devices and his most fearsome weapons. The Puritan Christopher Love exposes Satan's purpose in so doing:

Because he cannot make the children of God to dash their souls to pieces upon the rocks of presumption, therefore he labours to make them drown their souls in the gulf of desperation; because he cannot hinder a child of God from going into his master's joy in another world, he labours to hinder their master's joy from coming into them in this world. The devil will rather play at small game than no game at all: seeing he cannot keep them from going into heaven itself, he will

keep heaven from entering into them; because he cannot keep you from the having of grace, he will keep you as long as he can from having the sense of grace.

The means used by the Holy Spirit to strengthen assurance

If it is the work of the Spirit to bear witness with our spirits that we are children of God, we still need to enquire as to how he works to this end. Does he use means? Does he sometimes work without them? If he does use means, what means does he use? And how may his work in assurance be distinguished from Satanic delusions and the excesses of fanaticism?

That the Holy Spirit normally uses means which he blesses so that the believer enters into assurance is indicated by several passages of Scripture. These are directed to believers in order to move them to self-examination and diligence in good works so that the conscience, instructed by the Word of God, has good grounds for witnessing that we are in fact God's children.

In 1 Corinthians 11:28 the apostle Paul lays down the principles: 'Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup.' Thomas Brooks makes this comment: 'By examination the soul comes to see what right it has to Christ and all the precious things of his house; and believingly to eat so of the bread of life, that heavenly manna, as that it may live for ever.'⁹ If as a result of faithful self-examination there are grounds for being persuaded of our saving interest in Christ, then there is a witness within ourselves with which the Holy Spirit can bear his witness.

In 2 Corinthians 13:5 we are bidden to: 'Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?' (A.V.). Brooks argues that if 'Men, that have but a spark of that wisdom, righteousness, and holiness that is in God, will not put any upon the use of such or such means for the obtaining of health, wealth, or the like, unless there be a proper tendency in the use of those means prescribed to reach such ends,' then God who is 'infinite perfection in himself' could not possibly 'act below the creature' by putting men 'upon the use of those means that would not reach the ends for which the means were used'.¹⁰ In other words, if God by the Holy Spirit commands believers to examine themselves to ascertain their right to Christ, he will not deny to them the assurance that they are his sons if they are faithful in the performance of their duty.

Furthermore, Hebrews 6:11 shows that 'the full assurance of hope' may be realized in this life by the faithful use of means, for the readers are exhorted to demonstrate the same earnestness in this regard as they had manifested in serving the saints (Heb. 6:10). In this connection, Brooks' statement that 'A lazy Christian will always lack four things, viz. comfort, content, confidence, and assurance'¹¹ needs emphasis. Without the diligent use of means, a lazy Christian has no right to expect to receive assurance. The appointment of means is, in itself, an invitation to be diligent in their use.

The Lord's Supper is another of the means that the Holy Spirit employs to bear his witness to us that we are children of God. He binds himself to this ordinance in order to assure us of God's love, his free forgiveness and his complete salvation. The bread and the wine are the signs which convey to us the truth that Christ died for our sins. To quote Brooks again: 'In this sacrament Christ comes forth and shows his love, his heart, his bowels, his blood, that his children may no longer say, does the Lord Jesus love us? does he delight in us? etc.; but that they may say with the spouse, "I am my beloved's, and his desire is towards me," Song 7:10.'¹²

The third means that the Spirit uses is the hearing of the Word of God. The order is not significant as the priority in the use of these means differs from person to person. Paul records that when he preached to the Thessalonians 'our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction' (or assurance) (1 Thess. 1:5). Of the Galatian Christians Paul could ask, 'Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law, or by hearing with faith?' (Gal. 3:2). Brooks' comment on such verses as these is interesting because it reveals that, in the Puritan period, it was common for believers to be brought into assurance under the preaching of the Word. 'Many precious souls there be that have found Christ in this ordinance, when they could not find him in other ordinances, though they have sought him sorrowingly. Many a cold soul has been warmed in this ordinance, and many a hungry soul has been fed with manna in this ordinance, and many a thirsty soul has been refreshed with wine upon the lees in this ordinance, and many a dull soul has been quickened in this ordinance.'¹³

The hearing of the Word takes on a new significance when we appreciate that God is often pleased to work assurance by his spirit in the hearts of believers as the Word is being preached. Then with what prayerfulness and eager longing ought we to hear the Word if so be that God will be pleased to lift up the light of his countenance upon us and give us peace. It is perhaps because the congregations of the Puritans had such an elevated view of the ministry of the Word that the Holy Spirit was often pleased to seal the promises of God to many hearts in the assurance of salvation. Could it be that when there is a like view prevalent among us we shall experience the same gracious work of the Spirit in a more general way than we do at present?

To be continued — next time we go on to examine the question of the sovereign power of the Holy Spirit in his activities.

Footnotes

¹ *New Bible Dictionary* p. 100, article on Assurance. ² *Heaven on Earth*. Banner of Truth. Preface, p. 14. ³ *Ibid.*, p. 15. ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 14. ⁵ *A Body of Divinity*. Banner of Truth revised edition, p. 251. ⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 303. ⁷ Romans 8:5-17, Banner of Truth, p. 363. ⁸ The dejected soul's case, pp. 64, 65. Cited in *The Genius of Puritanism* by Peter Lewis, p. 92. ⁹ *op cit*, p. 26. ¹⁰ *op cit*, p. 27. ¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 111. ¹² *Ibid.*, p. 26. ¹³ *op cit*, pp. 74, 75.

Studies in Biblical Theology

The Character and Task of Biblical Theology

This is the third in a series of expositions by Don Garlington of Durham, England. The first appeared in R.T. 72, the second in R.T. 73. The author is due to contribute a paper on justification by faith at the Westminster Conference, London, in December this year.

In this third introductory article on biblical theology we turn our attention to general principles derived from special revelation and their significance for the interpretation of the Bible.

Proposition: the most fundamental fact of special revelation is that word and deed are inseparably related in the complex of God's self-disclosure.

As we consider the word-deed complex of revelation, two complementary facts must be kept in mind. The first is that revelation is the interpretation of God's redemptive acts. This means that revelation is never given arbitrarily, because revelatory words are always the accompaniment of what God does in the salvation of his people (usually after the event but sometimes before). A classic example is the song of Moses (Ex. 15:1-18) which not only celebrates but explains the significance of Israel's crossing of the Red Sea. To someone who might have been a spectator to this event, a highly unusual occurrence was seen to transpire. But it is the interpretive Word of God through Moses which clarifies that 'Thou hast led in thy steadfast love the people whom thou hast redeemed, thou hast guided them by thy strength to thy holy abode', and that 'The Lord will reign for ever and ever' (Ex. 15:13,18). This is very important for our understanding of the Word of God as written. Redemptive events in themselves partake of a certain opacity, and it is only the explanatory Word of God which removes every trace of ambiguity. Apart from the 'word of the cross', the cross itself remains shrouded in mystery.

The second of these complementary facts is that special revelation is itself a redemptive act. It is true that the Bible records and chronicles the activities of redemption in history. But it is not merely a record or chronicle, nor is it only an interpreter of God's saving activity; it is much more.¹ The giving of a verbal revelation and the inscripturation of that revelation are a part of the process by which God redeems a people for himself (cf. Jas. 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:23). The song of Moses was necessary to remove any doubt that God the Lord of the covenant had intervened at the Red Sea to save his people from their enemies. Thus to believe the word of Moses was to enter into actual possession of the Lord's redemption as symbolised by the crossing of the Red Sea. The point is important for all of theology, but it is especially so for biblical theology. We must not, in other words, view the Bible merely as a record of what God has done but actually as *a part of the saving process*. What the Christian holds in his hands is a great act in God's ultimate purpose to save, sanctify and glorify. The

reason why the recognition of this fact is so important is that it affects our attitudes toward Scripture and the way in which we do biblical theology. We approach the Scriptures not as historians or antiquarians but as those who have experienced the power of God's redemptive revelation in ourselves. And since we have become the recipients of saving power, it behoves us all the more to think God's thoughts after him. In the final analysis, therefore, biblical theology is nothing but the process of thinking God's thoughts after him in terms of the historical progression in which those thoughts have been articulated in the biblical revelation.

The proposition before us gains in importance as we consider the imbalance in modern theology between the acts of God and the words of Scripture. The common element in all critical evaluations of the character of revelation is that the words of the Bible are simply men's reflections on the acts of God. In some cases theological writings would concede that God actually did something, in other cases the supposed acts of God are taken to be the products of men's imaginations. In either case, whether actual or imagined, the *acts* of God are singled out as being of primary importance. The *words* of Scripture, therefore, are relegated to a position of secondary consideration, because they are only the thinking of religious men as they reflect upon what God has done. Scripture, then, is by definition the diary of human response to the saving acts of God. Still the most popular form of this position is the movement known as 'theology as recital'.² According to this view, biblical theology is basically confessional in nature, i.e., the Bible is a confession of faith. The cash value of this approach is to say that biblical theology is not (really) the study of what God has done in history as accompanied by special revelation. It is, rather, the study of the evolution of man's religious consciousness. In this light, the proposition stated at the beginning of this article becomes all the more vital to maintain. Over against the modern conception of biblical theology, we insist that the words of Scripture are just as much God's as the acts which precede the words. As far as we are concerned, the deed can never be played up at the expense of the word. Again, the act is incomprehensible apart from the word.

Implications of the proposition that word and deed are inseparably related in the complex of God's self-disclosure

A. Because redemption is progressive, revelation is progressive as well. Christ was not sent to earth immediately after the fall: there were many preparatory acts. Thus revelation is tied to these preparatory acts and is itself progressive in character. Revelation, no more than redemption, comes at one time and in one place. The point is illustrated by a simple sketch of revelation history. The Word of God came first to a man (Adam), then to various individuals (e.g., Abel and Cain), then to a family (Noah), then to a tribe (Abraham), afterwards to a nation (Israel) and finally to the world. It may be argued that the original intention of revelation was to be universalistic, since the whole race of men was to spring from Adam. But given the factor of sin, the universal revelation had to be postponed until the Last Adam performed his work. But even when the revelation becomes worldwide, it still is qualified as *redemptive* revelation. It

contains, therefore, the totality of God's saving acts in history and is in itself the crowning act of the whole process of redemption.

B. Redemptive revelation is progressive in the strict sense of the term. In other words, in each epoch of revelation God is not simply saying the same thing over again. As the circle of the recipients of revelation becomes wider and wider, the content of the revelation becomes fuller and more diversified. Furthermore, we see here not only the historical progression of God's Word along a time-line, there is as well its adaptation to its recipients. As more individuals are drawn within the pale of revelation, the many facets of human need begin to multiply. Since revelation seeks to remedy the problem of sin, its content expands to meet the needs of those who receive it. The Word of God confronts people in the concrete situations in which they find themselves. Peter says that the grace of God is 'many coloured' (*poikilos*, 1 Pet. 1:10). Therefore the Word of God assumes a 'many coloured' aspect in order to minister to the multiplicity of needs which we have as sinners.

C. Special revelation is historically progressive, but it also reiterates and conserves what has gone before. Vos speaks of periods of revelation which are creative, on the one hand, and conservative, on the other.³ Creative periods are those in which fresh revelation comes to individuals or groups. Conservative periods are those which reflect upon the earlier, more creative periods. It is important to have a new word from God, but it is equally important to retain what he has already spoken.

D. If the redemptive word follows the same course as the redemptive event, we must study the Word in such a way as to *honour* this progression. We must not simply acknowledge the pattern and then go on as if it did not exist. We must not, in other words, proceed as if the Bible had been given all at one time. We must honour the individual parts as they unfold. The character of revelation is decidedly epochal, and we must in our study be disciplined by these divisions which are acknowledged by the Scripture themselves. This means that we are responsible to find in each period its own peculiar emphases. We must decide what the biblical writer is telling us about a particular segment of the record. Furthermore, we must resist the temptation to import the emphases of later periods into earlier ones. It is true that later periods can illumine to a degree what the earlier ones are all about. But we cannot, for example, assume that Abel understood as much about the character of faith as the Author of Hebrews. Above all, if we honour the progression of redemptive revelation, we are not at liberty to incorporate the practices of one epoch into another. It is precisely at this point that the advocates of 'Theonomy' have not honoured the progression of revelation. (Theonomists are those who more or less take all of God's law in the Old Covenant and apply it to the New.)

E. If we must honour the progression and therefore the diversity of revelation, it is vital as well that we honour its theological unity. The epochs of revelation are not isolated blocks which operate in abstraction from one another.⁴ The most familiar illustration of this theological unity of Scripture is that of the

development of a seed into a mature plant. Thus the basic contrast between the various phases of revelation is that of immaturity vs. maturity. Each segment of the revelation displays its own sort of perfection, but the perfection of infancy or adolescence is not the perfection of adulthood. It is in this sense that later epochs can be of value in understanding the earlier ones. We can, in other words, understand the less mature as it relates to the more mature. This does not contradict what was said in the previous paragraph, rather it complements it. It is one thing to say that Abraham understood what the Apostle Paul understood; it is another thing to use Paul to determine what Abraham actually understood in his day. So it is that we maintain a proper balance between the progression of revelation and the theological unity of revelation by recognising this distinction: *the intention of God in one period is often clarified by later periods, but we are not to suppose that the earlier recipients of God's Word enjoyed the same levels of understanding as the men of later generations* (especially those in the era of New Testament fulfilment). This is merely the distinction between the more immediate and the more ultimate purposes of God in the process of his self-disclosure. The acknowledgement of this difference will provide the proper balance in our endeavour to honour both the historical progression and the theological unity of divine revelation. This, of course, has everything to say about the methodology of our biblical theology. A proper methodology recognises that there is a reciprocal relationship between the various epochs of redemptive revelation; this is why a later period can elucidate an earlier one. But reciprocity by the very nature of the case implies that there are things which ought to be kept distinct from one another. Therefore a truly *biblical* theology will maintain the delicate balance between the *independence* and the *interdependence* of the various epochs. To the degree that this balance is upset, to the same degree our theology will be inaccurate.

Notes

¹ See Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, pp. 80-84.

² The best known representatives are G. W. Wright, *The God Who Acts*, and G. Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*.

³ See *Biblical Theology*, pp. 90-92.

⁴ As is virtually assumed by Dispensationalism.



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Modernism in Review

by Gwynne Ll. Williams

To sow doubt, 'has God said?' — and then promote rejection of God has always been Satan's method. This method undermined Adam and it undermines his descendants today. For a thousand years before the Reformation the authority of Scripture was made void by human tradition. Satan always aims to destroy the authority of God's Word. The way he does this is to entice men to think that they are more intelligent than God's Word written. So it was in the age of 18th century rationalism. Many thought themselves far too intelligent to believe and submit to the holy writings of the Bible.

In the early 19th century a movement got under-way which has proved to be the most harmful of all. This was terrible in its destructive power because it took place among the ranks of Christians. This movement in very general terms is sometimes called Modernism, sometimes Liberalism, and sometimes Biblical Criticism. Biblical Criticism captured most evangelical Bible seminaries and colleges and in due course laid waste whole denominations which were previously evangelical.

Much of the initial inspiration behind the Biblical Criticism movement was the theory of evolution as propounded by Darwin. It was naively imagined that man had evolved from the simplest life form and was himself quite far travelled on the road to perfection. Julius Wellhausen (1844-1910) the German High Priest of Liberalism ruthlessly applied the evolutionary theory to Old Testament History and Theology. He turned Biblical Chronology on its head by regarding the Minor Prophets as the earliest documents and the Pentateuch as a Post-Exilic extravaganza. He held that the faith of Israel had developed from a primitive polytheism to its great Monotheistic heights by a tortuously slow process. Wellhausen and his army of admirers quite literally rewrote large sections of the Old Testament to make it fit in with their ideas. To these sceptical eyes, any hint of the supernatural was extremely suspect, consequently the whole concept of predictive prophecy was unacceptable. It was therefore necessary to develop a new understanding of the Prophet as a proclaimer of a message of Social and Political justice, rather than to see his role as declaring on occasion the future judgement or salvation of God on his people.

The criteria of these Higher Critics in reassembling the history of Israel were purely subjective. There never has been a shred of hard evidence to support the fanciful reconstructions of Wellhausen and his disciples. Because these men had not experienced miracles, they presumed that the miraculous element in Scripture was an invention of various misty-eyed dreamers. If they found something in the Canon which they could not understand or which was unacceptable to their minds, then it was instantly regarded as a late interpolation. The pioneers of Criticism always boasted that their motive was a

lofty one, namely to make Christianity more attractive to people by making it acceptable to their reason. This rather feeble defence was accepted by large numbers of well meaning but gullible Christians. Happily there were other Christians with rather more discernment, one such was 'Rabbi' Duncan who in 1867 noted that the attack had been launched mainly against the Old Testament but declared: 'It needs more charity than I possess to believe that some of the critics do not know where all this will lead us. The Person of Christ, his work, his salvation are the things against which these attacks are really levelled.'

Duncan was soon vindicated by the flood of hostile literature which poured forth against the New Testament. One particularly obnoxious development was the vogue for reconstructing the life of Christ. Most of these books were pure flights of fancy, projecting an image of Jesus as a well meaning Galilean rustic, or possibly as a Socialist, or even as a Nineteenth Century Liberal in First Century clothing. 'Rabbi' Duncan had indeed been correct, Higher Criticism had removed the first Adam very quickly and the Last Adam was soon to follow. Christ was regarded as a Saviour by example, but as Gresham Machen pointed out 'The Jesus of the New Testament has at least one advantage over the Jesus of modern reconstruction — He is real . . . a genuine Person whom a man can love'.

The great claim was that by making the Bible more acceptable to the human reason, Christianity would be saved from extinction. In actual fact this movement was a desperately flimsy disguise for old fashioned unbelief. The Living God of Scripture was not presented or even acknowledged by this system of thought. The new authority was man himself, anything that was unacceptable to his mind or outside his experience was rejected. For over a Century this movement has been in the ascendancy and the results are all too obvious. Despite many attempts by John Robinson and others to put the Church in the limelight it is widely regarded by the world as an irrelevance. Liberalism continues to reap a harvest of closed or closing churches and masses of people who are totally indifferent to the things of God.

A Compromise with Biblical Criticism

The outbreak of World War One in 1914 had a devastating effect on Liberal Modernism. The horror of the trenches and the use of poison gas killed off any idea that Twentieth Century man was somehow superior to his predecessors. Karl Barth was a young Swiss Pastor who had unquestioningly accepted the teachings and practices of the critics. Barth had studied under many of the leading German scholars and never doubted what he had heard. He was absolutely horrified to discover that many of his former teachers warmly commended the aggressive German war policy. Barth summarised his own feelings: 'So far as I was concerned there was no future for the theology of the Nineteenth Century'. In addition his pastoral experience was showing Barth that the ideas propounded in the ivory towers of learning were of no value to ordinary people who were being battered by the storms of life. Karl Barth became convinced that what was needed was a more positive approach to

Scripture. Often in Barth's writings the influence of the Reformers is stronger than that of his Liberal teachers. He came to regard the Bible as the self-revelation of God which carried its own authentication. Barth even extended inspiration to the individual words of the text. This positive note was very welcome to his readers. However there are more worrying aspects of Barth's teaching. He emphasised very strongly that the Biblical writers were sinful humans at best and argued that consequently what they wrote must contain mistakes. Having thus opened the door to the excesses of the critics, Barth tried to close it again by his theology of revelation. He taught that the Bible on the shelf was an ordinary book, but that when it was read it became the Word of God. That is to say the Scriptures are not the infallible and spoken (once and for all) Word of God but Scripture merely becomes revelation when the Holy Spirit uses it in the lives of individuals.

Many writers have followed Barth in attempting to salvage what they can from the wreckage of Biblical Criticism. J. B. Phillips propounded a similar theory in the *Ring of Truth*. The book starts off in a promising way: 'I do not care a rap what the avantgarde scholars say; I do very much care what God says and does'. The main thesis of the work is far less satisfactory however: 'Any man who has sense as well as faith is bound to conclude that it is the truths which are inspired and not the words which are merely vehicles of truth'. In his stress on sense, Phillips is saying something very similar to the earlier critics with their stress on human reason.

In a similar vein, William Barclay in his *Introducing the Bible* makes much of the authority of Scripture as the inspired Word of God. It soon becomes clear that his view of inspiration is not that taught by the Bible, for instance when he says: 'The conception of inspiration as producing a Divinely dictated, infallible book produces more problems than it solves'. He then elucidates his view of the Bible as a witness to the revelation of God rather than being in itself Revelation.

There is much in the writing of these and other men of similar persuasion to attract our sympathy. Their rejection of the sterile Liberalism of the Nineteenth Century is refreshing, but the problem is that they differ from the critics only in degree. Both schools agree on the possibility of error in the Bible, but the salvage team tries not to reject too much of the text. History shows that to deny the absolute inerrancy of Scripture is to start out on that slippery slope which ends in a denial of all truth.

Evangelical Ineptitude in Refuting Biblical Criticism

For decades the only Evangelical response to the work of the critics was a studied silence, the rabbit hole mentality. In Britain, the vast majority of those who held a satisfactory view of Scripture were influenced by at least one of three movements which encouraged an unhealthy, introverted attitude. These groups distracted Christians from providing a proper answer to the Critics. T. D. Harford-Battersby, the vicar of Keswick in the heart of the beautiful English Lake District decided to organise a holiness conference in the town. The major influence was the American holiness movement, but Keswick soon displaced

the former as the leading force in the holiness movement in the English-speaking world. The central Keswick teaching was that sanctification depended on the will of the Christian rather than the will of God. The Keswick mentality had no patience at all for the more orthodox idea of having to constantly fight the devil preferring to think of sanctification as an instantly available experience. For many decades the Keswick movement became increasingly pietistic, developing the 'thought for the day' or devotional mentality rather than the idea that we should be robust in systematic theology and clearly formulated doctrine.

A second development was the rise to prominence of the Pentecostal movement which gained for the first time in Church history an almost universal respectability. On the whole Pentecostalism had an orthodox theology in all areas except that of the work of the Spirit. They stressed that every Christian desperately needed an experience which was called the Baptism of the Spirit. For many Pentecostals the only acceptable proof that a believer had received this blessing was for them to speak in a strange tongue, even though that tongue is not put to any searching tests and can merely be a gushing forth of gobbledegook from the inner recesses of subjective emotion.

Many have shown the fallacy of this position. It is important to note that Pentecostalism tended to rest and stay with the experience of the Baptism of the Spirit. This leads to an attitude of complacency about theology. After all one can be cold and academic. A consequence of this attitude is seen inasmuch as Pentecostalism has produced no theologian of any stature. The Pentecostals were certainly in no position to oppose the work of the critics and so chose to ignore them completely.

A final movement which must be mentioned briefly is the dispensationalist or pre-millennial school of eschatology. There has been a revival of interest in this ancient teaching (known as Chiliasm in the early Church), in the early Nineteenth Century. It was J. N. Darby who popularised the idea with a lot of help from the Scofield Bible. This book taught dispensationalism in its footnotes and led many readers to assume that the system was Biblical.

The movement expected the Church to be taken away from the earth suddenly and to return in a thousand years with Christ to judge the damned. Then the Jews would assume control of the earth. This eccentric and extra-Biblical view found an ocean of support, indeed modern expressions are still being produced of which the most notorious is Hal Lindsey's *Late Great Planet Earth*. The net result of this teaching was to make many Christians prophetically minded. To this day large numbers of well meaning believers are obsessed by the subject, but the danger is that Christianity becomes an eccentric sect, obsessed with the toes of the beast and the claws of the dragon. Dispensationalism is hardly an encouragement to the Christian to go on the offensive, and expose the folly of Liberalism and the eternal truth of the Gospel.

Opposition to Biblical Christianity

Throughout its long history, the Church has been plagued by heresies and has

often been slow to recognise that all the weapons of both defence and attack are in Scripture. The crucial point is that a Biblical Christian seeks to live according to every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. This means that he is not swept about by every wind of doctrine. In a sermon on Roman Catholicism, Dr. Lloyd-Jones summarised the attitude of the rounded Christian to all aberrations of the truth: 'The only final answer . . . is the positive preaching of the Christian truth and the great Reformed doctrines'. In a nutshell that is the only satisfactory way of dealing with error, as is seen in the lives of many Christians over the years.

When C. H. Spurgeon encountered the Higher Critics a century ago he was aware that the movement would endanger the spiritual life of an entire generation. He gave many clear warnings to the Baptist Union of the folly of tolerating, accommodating or encouraging the Liberals. When his advice was rejected, Spurgeon decided that the best way of proceeding was to break his ties with the Union. Today his action in breaking with those who supported error has been fully vindicated by the fruit which a century of Liberalism has yielded. It is highly significant that the words of the Victorian Critics are not read in any number today because they are ludicrous. They are ignored even by their modern counterparts. On the other hand the writings of Spurgeon are profitably read and studied all over the world today. The explanation of course is that he produced a timeless exposition of the Word of God. Spurgeon in his task of proclaiming the whole counsel of God demonstrated the folly and the danger of setting man up as an authority over the Word of God.

In the next generation one of the ablest and most thorough opponents of the Higher Critics was based at the Princeton Seminary in the USA. B. B. Warfield dealt with these views in his writings in a truly masterly and devastating way. His method was to outline the theory under consideration in a painstakingly fair manner and then to destroy it by sound Biblical exegesis. Consequently his work is of immense value today because of its positive note. Warfield was essentially a positive expositor who in applying the truth exposed and demolished the unbelief of the Liberals.

That Liberalism was an all pervading force can be seen in the fact that by 1929 the former Reformed stronghold of Princeton had fallen. As a result of this loss, a new institute was formed: Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia. One of the leading figures at Westminster for almost four decades was Scotsman John Murray whose written works are reviewed in this issue of *Reformation Today*. Prof. Murray was essentially an expositor of the Word but when he judged it necessary he did take time to expose the fallacy of Liberal views. There are few examinations of such thought which are as devastating as Murray's comments on William Barclay and the Virgin Birth. John Murray clearly stands in the mainstream Reformed tradition and his works have the timeless qualities of Scriptural exegesis. When the whole Liberal system passes into obscurity, the writings of this man will still be esteemed by the Church.

The following material by Sharon Hulse, who is at present working in a school in Malawi, consists of a brief summary of French Protestant (Huguenot) history followed by a review of a book by Janet Glen Gray, 'The French Huguenots: Anatomy of Courage', published by Baker Book House (282 pp., \$8.95, 1981). Sharon discovered the book in the library of the Presbyterian Seminary, Zomba. See editorial comment.

The Reformation in France

The Reformation ushered in a period of religious wars and civil conflicts. The path from denominational variety to religious toleration was neither direct nor easy. The principle of *cuius regio, eius religio* led to protestant rulers of protestant states, catholic rulers of catholic states, and the idea that citizenship equalled membership of the national church. If citizens withdrew allegiance to the monarch as head of the church, then their loyalty to the state was immediately questioned. Church and state had been connected in the European tradition since Constantine's conversion in AD 313. (One thousand six hundred and seventy years later in England they are not yet separated.) It is within this context that we have to consider the religious persecutions of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Perhaps in France we see one of the saddest cases of this confusion of religion and politics.

At the time of the Reformation, the protestants in France were known as Lutherans, but they were very much 'Calvin's Church'. Calvin began preaching reform in France in 1534, but fled to Switzerland when government repression tightened. The 1536 edition of 'The Institutes' was dedicated to king Francis I of France, in the hope of persuading him that French protestants were not dangerous radicals, but simply believers in the Bible. Submission to civil authorities was stressed. From 1541, when Calvin finally settled in Geneva, to the time of his death, he was intimately involved in the building up of the protestant community in France. By the mid-sixteenth century this group had grown in numbers and influence to an extent that alarmed the government, for it seemed that they were becoming 'a state within a state'. Repression, then resistance (combined with numerous other internal and external factors)

(continued from page 25)

The last hundred years or so has shown conclusively that Liberalism is a destructive, harmful force. What history has made clear was just as obvious to Spurgeon and others, because Biblical Criticism is a rejection of the authority of God. Again the century has shown what was already known, that only a robust Biblical Christianity stands the test of time because that is God's way. The task of the Christian must be to proclaim the whole counsel of God and when he comes across error he must expose it without losing sight of his primary task. After all an unconverted person who accepts the inerrancy of Scripture is still on his way to hell. We are not to be fired by a spirit of hatred but by the Spirit of God.

The best defence against Biblical Criticism is to be built up in our grasp and appreciation of the authority of Scripture through expository, systematic, doctrinal and applicatory preaching. That too is the best means of being equipped to help those who have been hindered by unbelief spawned from Biblical Criticism.

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issued in eight civil wars between 1562 and 1598. These ended when the huguenot leader, Henry of Navarre succeeded to the throne, at the price of converting to Catholicism, and granted toleration to his former co-religionists (1598).

If the sixteenth century was the century of civil wars, the following century was one of growing absolutism. Anarchy gradually gave way to the consolidation and centralization of royal authority. The monarch's claim to 'Divine Right' culminated in the reign of 'The Sun King' Louis XIV, who detested any imagined or real threat to his authority. 'Heresy' posed such a threat and various means were used to 'convert' heretics. Once a satisfactory number of conversions had been bought or forced, it was claimed that as there were no huguenots left, toleration was no longer needed. In 1685 the Edict of Nantes was revoked and all the religious and civil rights of protestants were thus removed — including the right to emigrate. Despite this, a great number of huguenots managed to escape to England, Ireland, America and elsewhere. France thereby lost many of her most talented and industrious citizens.

Some groups continued to operate, despite severe repression, most notably in the Cevennes region. The number of protestants however had dropped from 20% of the population in 1600 to 12% in 1685 and 2% in 1900.

Janet Gray's book, *The French Huguenots: Anatomy of Courage*, is a well presented and readable account of the story of the huguenots. The author's main concern is the spiritual aspect of the movement. Her conviction is that 'the Huguenot's primary motivation was religious', but she shows clearly the diversity of motivation within the movement. There are many instances of courage, faith and

patience, but there are also many examples of political jockeying for position. (The most significant sixteenth century leader of the movement recanted twice and is popularly remembered for a variety of amorous adventures.) The religious aspect could perhaps have been highlighted with more case studies on local congregations and individual pastors.

The introduction gives a concise account of Calvin's life, but then rather defensively raises 'some popular distortions of what Calvinism is'. If these had to be stated, they demand a rather more carefully documented refutation than is provided. The positive influence of Calvinism on French protestantism is then explained.

The first chapter includes a survey of the missionary movement from Geneva into France masterminded by Calvin with great secrecy and skill. We see in the next chapter how persecution led to the development of resistance theories and ultimately to civil war. The plots and counterplots and violence of course had the effect of hindering evangelism and church growth. The third chapter deals with the Massacre of St. Bartholomew's Day, 1572, its prelude and aftermath. This was a calculated political act, certain politically valuable huguenots such as Henry of Navarre (also the king's mistress) were spared. The Paris 'mob' seized the opportunity to indulge in days of looting, rape and murder, and anyone who had property that was coveted was at risk.

The anarchy that followed this atrocity eventually simmered down with the accession of Henry IV and the declaration of the Edict of Nantes. Chapter four is entitled 'Chaos, Regicide, and a Huguenot king'. The last chapter traces the rise of absolute monarchical power, the consequent ending of religious toleration, and the decline of the huguenot movement.

The massive spiritual needs of France are here described by David Ellis. Originally of Dublin, David is now a virtual Frenchman, having laboured as a pastor for a number of years at Montpellier, France, ably supported by his wife Barbara. The massive spiritual needs of France are here ably portrayed.

France — a wilderness

France is the largest Western European country in terms of land surface and boasts a population of over 53 million. The typical Frenchman does not exist as the country is divided into different regions totally different the one from the other. The Celtic Bretons in the west, the Germanic Alsations in the east, the Basques in the south-west, and the multi-faceted Mediterraneans make up a very varied people. The regions often have their own language or dialect and though French is the first language of most, the local culture and tongue may regularly take precedence over the attachment to general national interests. It is in the domain of national achievement that the French cock crows in every corner of the country. This may be in technological advance, industrial development, or in the world of sport. In general, independent of the region from which one emanates, one is proud to be French.

Most French people are 'baptised' Roman Catholics, but many are not practising Catholics. Thus the popular notion that France is a Roman Catholic country can be supported statistically but contradicted in practical reality. During the Pope's visit a few years ago, he pleaded with the 'elder daughter of the Church' to return to Mother Rome. There exists a small conservative wing in the Church led by Mgr. Lefevre which has received considerable publicity, not as a force to be reckoned with, nor as a vital revival within Catholicism, but as a vestige of an obscurantist past. Yet there are those within the Catholic system who are truly seeking the truth

and to serve God. Quite a few writers, theologians and lecturers are positively moving in a direction that would honour Biblical teaching. But are these men representative of the people? Have they a large following among the people? It would appear not to be so.

Minority religious groups include Protestants, Jews and Muslims. Among Protestants is to be found much Liberalism. The largest Protestant church, Eglise Réformée de France (E.R.F.) would call itself Calvinist. However, in most instances this means simply being able to trace its origin to the Reformation under Calvin. And though one hears of adherence to *La Confession de la Rochelle* one is obliged to record that many have long since turned away from the Evangelical and Reformed testimony of this confession. It might be added here that there are some men, convinced of true Biblical doctrine and values who are seeking to be faithful within main-line Protestantism. The Evangelical Reformed Faculty at Aix-en-Provence is playing an important role in training these for the ministry in the Reformed churches. Obviously the faculty at Aix finds itself often in tension with the other Protestant Theological faculties and the E.R.F. insists that students who have studied at Aix must do a supplementary year of studies in Montpellier at their faculty before being allowed to enter the ministry of the E.R.F.

While on the subject of theological faculties, it must be noted that the faculty at Vaux-sur-Seine which tends

to be the training centre of the Free churches also does a remarkable work and is turning out some very fine men for the ministry in Baptist and Free Evangelical churches. It is at Vaux that Henri Blocher is professor of Systematic Theology. Henri Blocher is probably the leading evangelical theologian in the French-speaking world. He is one of the few that non-evangelicals note and listen to. There is also a Bible training institute at Nogent-sur-Marne which is strongly Evangelical and there are several minor institutions, scattered over the country. It is probably true to say that in the three institutions that have been named, many of the teaching personnel, though not all, would be Reformed in doctrine and practice.

Baptists may be divided into four basic groups. There is the Baptist Federation, which has about 60 churches and is attached to the French Protestant Federation. These churches are very varied in character. Many are Arminian, others are Charismatic, and a few would be Calvinistic. The Baptist Association was formed in 1921 having been obliged by unfortunate circumstances to separate from other main-line Baptists. This association counts 21 churches including annexes. A good number of these churches are basically Calvinistic in outlook and the upcoming generation of pastors are in the main men who love the doctrines of grace.

Then there are the independent churches of French origin such as the Tabernacle in Paris or the Bonne Nouvelle in Strasbourg, to name but two. Lastly there are a number of imported Baptist churches mostly created by American missionaries. Baptist Mid-Missions and Free-will Baptists are two of the groups that are quite active. Added to these are many varied types of independent Baptists. All of these would be Arminian and very much dominated by an American cultural

approach to evangelism and church planting.

Much of evangelical thinking has been strongly influenced by an easy-believism in evangelism linked to a strong pre-millennialism in eschatology with varying shades of dispensationalism thrown in. The only book that clearly states a non-premillennial eschatology is W. J. Grier's *The Momentous Event*, translated under the title *Le Grand Dénouement*, and published by Grâce et Vérité (formerly Banner of Truth). Some pamphlets and articles supporting a-millennialism exist but are hotly contested by the other school. F. Buhler of the Baptist Association church in Mulhouse has strongly defended a-millennialism in recent times through the review articles in *Ichthus*, one of the few reliable evangelical periodicals. *Ichthus* is very general in its approach and content and not distinctive in its theology.

Slowly but surely, sound Biblically orientated books are becoming increasingly available. Whereas much that is to be found in Christian book stores is of a superficial sort, more and more are the publishers who are concerned with the doctrinal soundness of the content of their books. Grâce et Vérité have long been in this business and in more recent times Farel Publications (O.M.) and Kerygma Publications (linked with the Faculty at Aix) have been producing such books as Calvin's New Testament commentaries and the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*.

Some few years ago some theological students of Reformed convictions joined together to produce a theological journal. *Hokhma* (from Hebrew meaning 'wisdom') presents its reader with meaty material. Not exactly bed-time reading the new magazine encourages deep reflection on theological questions and problems of hermeneutics, philosophy and the like. *Hokhma* is but one

indication of the general direction which the new generation of pastors and teachers is taking. There is obviously the danger of intellectualism for its own sake, yet such efforts must be encouraged if future ministers of the Gospel are to receive help as they face the onslaught of modern thinking with its opposition or indifference to godliness and a sanctified mind.

As in other parts of the world, Islam is on the increase in France. With a sizeable Arab community and immigrant work-force there is an important mission-field among these people. The doors to missionaries are not always open to go into North Africa and the North African Mission are regularly seeing workers expelled from Algeria and Morocco. The pressures on Gospel work in these countries is such that freedom of worship and association among Christians is a hazardous thing. Some expelled workers are currently working among Muslims in different parts of France. This needs prayer.

There is very worthwhile work being done among Jews which is centred in the Baptist church, rue de Lille, in Paris, of which Louis Schweitzer is the pastor. They produce a monthly news-sheet called *Le Berger d'Israel* (Israel's Shepherd), and organise regular Bible study groups for Israelites, as they are known in France.

It is true that God is raising up his servants to preach the Gospel in this country. Yet one is obliged to recognise the vast need that exists and the relatively few labourers in the field. There are literally thousands of towns and villages that have no Evangelical witness whatsoever.

In spite of economic difficulties, inflation and devaluation of its money, unemployment, trade deficits and a climate of unrest which was recently manifested by numerous student

demonstrations all over the country, France still has the appearance of an affluent people. Its technology is highly advanced. The aeronautics industry is one of the best in the world. In the city of Lille, the most modern metro in the world commenced regular services recently. The railway industry has produced one of the fastest trains in the world which now competes with the Interior airline. For example this train will reduce the travelling time from Paris to Montpellier from a former 7.50 hours to 4.50 hours. Meeting people in the streets and in the every-day routine of life one gets the impression of a comfortable, easy-going, happy lifestyle, yet alcoholism is a rocketing social ill. Psychiatric clinics are overflowing. Psychiatrists have long waiting lists. Broken homes are increasing at a frightening speed. Crime is on the increase. People are feeling more and more insecure. High ranking businessmen and officials are forever consulting spiritists in seeking to find some assurance for their future.

To speak of immorality is almost superfluous because moral standards are rapidly disappearing. Respect for law is becoming a rare priority. Self rules and nothing else matters. Yet, in this land of contradictions there are still some glimmering hopes that shine through now and again. It is not in every country in Europe that you will find comedians and television personalities getting publicly 'rapped over the knuckles' for lack of respect of religious minorities and for mocking religion and blaspheming. Freedom of expression exists for everyone. Even if there is total disagreement on religious convictions the right to hold these is largely respected by most.

It is impossible for anyone who has not lived in France for a prolonged period to understand the French people. Many Anglo-Saxon (British and North

2nd and 3rd Degree Separation

The New Testament tells us plainly that we must have nothing to do with false teachers who are intent on destroying the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The clearest passages refer to the Judaizers who by adding to the Gospel would destroy it (Galatians 1), and those who denied the incarnation (2 John). Translated into our modern era one equivalent is the Roman Catholic teachers who destroy the authority by a massive accumulation of authoritative tradition (see article on Luther). The other equivalent, feared equally by Catholics and Protestants, is Modernism or Liberalism (see article by Gwynne Ll. Williams).

If evangelicals unite in co-operative evangelism with Rome and with Moder-

nists it blatantly denies the principle of separation insisted upon in Galatians 1 and 2 John. Some however (Mission England?) insist that evangelism is a cause of such merit that co-operation with Roman Catholics and Modernists does not matter. Nevertheless 1st degree separation is to separate from those who destroy the Gospel and such separation is mandatory.

What is 2nd degree separation? 2nd degree separation is when I separate from fellow evangelicals who ignore 1st degree separation. What is 3rd degree separation? 3rd degree separation is when I separate from evangelicals who refuse to take a firm line over 2nd degree separation. To illustrate the point suppose Iain Murray joins a denomination in which sup-

American) missionaries are astounded at the cultural shock that hits them after a very brief stay in the country. There is little similarity between Anglo-Saxon and French cultures. A presumptuous attitude in our manner of going about the work of the Gospel in this desperately needy country is to court disaster. The recognition of the cultural gulf that does exist will alleviate many of the unnecessary problems that are provoked by unaware and unprepared missionaries sent to France by uninformed missionary boards. Thankfully some churches are realising the absolute necessity for delegates to visit those working in the country and to scout out the land before attempting to send missionaries or plant churches. How often has the work been marred and hindered by well-meaning but maladapted and maladroit missionaries.

Preachers must be sure of their calling and must be prepared to work closely with the existing Gospel churches. The absolute necessity of mastering the language cannot be sufficiently emphasised. Too many arrive at a working knowledge of French and continue

during maybe 20 to 30 years of speaking like a 'Spanish cow', as the saying goes here. Preaching the Word to French people demands a profound respect for the French language in order to communicate effectively from the pulpit.

Some well-meaning missionaries arrive with little or no idea of the doctrine of the Church. This is a hindrance to the advance of the Kingdom of Christ in France.

I conclude by recalling some of the main facts. 53 million people including 1.5 million North African and other Muslims and 2 million other immigrant workers. About 0.3% of all these people come under the name of Protestant. Only around 30,000 could be loosely called Evangelical. Baptists number only about 5,000. What is this but a few flowers in a spiritual wilderness?

Evangelicals are indeed a small minority, but so was Elijah and so were the twelve Apostles. The urgent need of the day is for God to raise up men gifted and equipped to labour in a wilderness and turn it into the garden of the Lord.

posedly) there are some liberals. He could be accused of failing to apply 1st degree separation. Now we are (according to the 2nd degree principle) supposed to break fellowship with Iain Murray. But Erroll Hulse does not break fellowship with Iain Murray. In fact he even (reasons given presently) encourages him! Because Hulse does not apply 2nd degree separation the 3rd degree separation comes into force and he (Hulse) in turn is separated from. But suppose some brother disagrees with that 3rd degree separation and continues to fellowship with Hulse, why then we must surely apply 4th degree separation! He who does not break fellowship with Hulse must be separated from. But if there is someone who does not agree with this 4th degree separation, why then let us be very pure and isolate ourselves from all germs and apply 5th degree separation! Indeed why not go all the way and be like the Exclusives and say NO fellowship with anyone else except ourselves!

The question of 2nd and 3rd degree separation is illustrated by the stance taken by the minister of Spurgeon's Tabernacle, Peter Masters. He and his assembly provide an outstanding example of persevering local church evangelism. The evangelistic literature produced and the expository articles in the *Sword and Trowel* are of a consistently high standard. The stand taken against entertainment evangelism and the false claims of the Charismatic Movement have been clear and helpful. It is a pity therefore that good work should be spoiled by a spirit of extreme independence and sometimes rash and unwarranted claims. 'As dead flies give perfume a bad smell, so a little folly outweighs wisdom and honour' (Ecc. 10:1). Under a melodramatic title Masters writes in *S and T* (1983 No. 3), 'Still more pastors renounce their former views', . . . 'some are reportedly throwing themselves into Mission England, the most unprincipled effort in ecumenical evangelism so far seen'. Some documentation of why it is the most unprincipled effort so far would be helpful. Some years ago I wrote a book called *Billy Graham — The Pastor's Dilemma*, explaining why crusade evangelism is a dilemma. Firstly I drew

attention to the erroneous idea of decisionism which is pitifully shallow, and secondly, explained the danger of Ecumenism. Since that time both the superficial and the ecumenical emphases have got worse. Masters' claim then is probably correct but it helps to have the facts.

Masters says 'some are reportedly' throwing themselves into Mission England. Some? Who exactly? Two? Three? 'Reportedly'? Why aren't the issues documented? Reports are not always reliable. For instance a rumour started in South Africa that Peter Masters had gone Charismatic! (Inconceivable!) We immediately corrected it and said, not that Peter, another Peter! Reports need to be documented, but what is the point of attacking Iain Murray who is 12,000 miles away, and as far removed from having anything to do with Mission England as this planet is from the stars of other galaxies? Says our Peter (without a line of documentation), 'the apostate condition of the Presbyterian Church of Australia is utterly beyond all argument'. But that is not documentation. You can turn up the decibels and shout something as loud as you can but that does not document it. So what then does Iain say? In a personal letter to me dated 27th July he declares:

'This congregation is not an evangelical island in an apostate denomination. There is only one man in our whole presbytery over whose position as a minister I hear doubts (theological) raised. A considerable struggle is taking place — is it not everywhere? — but in Victoria, Queensland and now here, *all* theological training (three theological faculties) is controlled by evangelical, reformed men. That is an amazing change. Masters made much of the words of a Barthian, Crawford Miller, who used to teach in Sydney, but Miller, despite a wish to continue was terminated by the N.S.W. General Assembly.'

To return then to the subject of separation. It is from outright, notorious heretics that we separate, not our evangelical brothers. We cannot join in Mission England. If evangelical ministers

Whitefield Fraternal

Monday, September 26th, 1983

Free Evangelical Church, New England Road
9 a.m. breakfast followed by
four responses (Anglican, B.U., Pentecostal and
F.I.E.C.) to Whitefield Manifesto
We aim to conclude at about midday

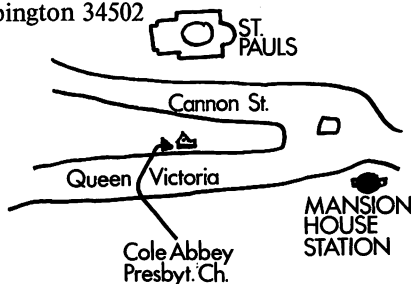
Monday, October 17th, 1983

London — Cole Abbey Presbyterian Church, Queen Victoria Street
(near Mansion House underground station and St. Paul's Cathedral)
Coffee 10.30 a.m.

Lunch provided

Donald MacLeod — 11 a.m. — 1 Corinthians 12-14
2 p.m. — Revelation 20:1-6

Telephone Dr. Richard Phillips. Crawley 513317 or 511893
or Rev John Nicholls, Orpington 34502



do join in then we should reason with them about it, but certainly not treat them with Galatians 1 treatment.

One of the reasons why we are so weak is because we have made too little effort to foster personal fraternal relationships with fellow evangelicals who are struggling to teach their assemblies and rescue them from positions of ignorance and compromise. Where we have had strong fraternal relationships there churches have often been reclaimed from compromised positions. Peter Masters himself went to Spurgeon's when it was still in the Union. How he can criticize others who seek to do the same we do not comprehend. If we had all to retreat from any denomination because some ground was gained by Liberalism it would be mass suicide. We do not hand over God's flock to a pack of wolves just because some wolves raid the

sheep folds. In South Africa the Baptist Union (the Reformed churches are rightly within that Union) won their battle over Liberalism in the 1920's. Now they are faced with the Charismatic battle. It is the view of some Baptist ministers in S.A. that the longer they delay dealing with it, the more they will suffer, and the greater will be the losses in the end. We should note that Spurgeon withdrew from the Union *only when he believed* there was no way that *the Union* could be won. He did not say that individual churches could not be won and retrieved.

Evangelical unity is a complex and neglected subject. A purely negative approach is sterile and harmful. For further information about efforts to correct what has, for many years, been a barren approach, you are invited to refer to the page which reports the Whitefield Fraternal.

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