

REFORMATION TODAY'83



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Professor John Murray

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See inside back cover for the details of
The Carey Conference for Ministers
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Editorial

Essential for the effective preacher is a thorough understanding of the doctrines of grace together with a comprehensive knowledge of the invitation passages and texts of Scripture. He will need to hold to the sovereignty of God in the new birth while at the same time have confidence that practical means are used to bring people to faith. If he thinks that the new birth depends upon his ability to get people to respond in an appeal, to raise a hand, or to come to the penitent form, or sign a card, then a door to a world of heterodox methods is opened — a Pandora's box of artifices and subtleties.

It is required of the preacher, or any soulwinner for that matter, that he be sure of the love of God for all men. At the same time he must have faith in God's electing love, that love in which God will effectually apply the atoning work of Christ to sinners. There is no contradiction between the universality of common grace and what we call irresistible grace. There is no contradiction between the teaching of Bill Downing and the article on the benevolent love of God. Hopefully the latter will form part of a paperback to replace the booklet *The free offer of the Gospel* by Carey Publications. An outline of the chapters is provided on the next page. With regard to the subject of common grace and the free invitations of the Gospel we owe much to Prof. John Murray who possessed an unusual ability to keep close to Scripture in expounding difficult and sometimes seemingly contradictory truths. It is our part as pastors to popularise and apply his careful theological teaching. His collected writings are invaluable and our readers will appreciate Austin Walker's review.

With a steady increase of pressure in the U.K. to return to altar-calling it is urgent that we have a paperback which is so positive and close to Scripture that it will be seen that we do not need to resort to human inventions.

2nd and 3rd degree separation

Many have expressed appreciation for the short article which appeared with the above title in *R.T.75*. While it is very important to be faithful with regard to separation from error, it is all too easy to fall into an unbalanced negative attitude or bigotry which refuses to see any good in evangelicals who are involved in impure denominations. The problem is that they do not share our interpretation. They reject the charge that they are merely 'in it to win it'. Many of them agree that the possibility of winning over their denomination as a whole is extremely remote. Their concern is with their calling to pastor distinctly evangelical churches. It is such work which absorbs their time and effort. It is helpful if we think in realistic rather than theoretical terms by remembering that denominational affiliation is only one part of this complex subject. A host of errors exist and each calls for a Biblical response. Added to the difficulty is the fact that often smaller matters such as how we order our worship services are inflated into matters of huge concern because some church members threaten to resign unless they have their way. When individuals get worked up to a high pressure then this inevitably creates new dangers of division. Stuart Olyott testifies that he has seen Christian leaders boil over their differences on discipline of the Lord's Table but doubts whether they would ever work up such indignation about those who deny the Deity of Christ! We know this to be true on many issues. The whole idea is not to discount the importance of the Biblical teaching on separation but to give much

Cover picture — Ron Edmonds is seen white shirt preaching with the help of a Brazilian pastor interpreting the message into Portuguese. This issue contains a report on first Reformed conference in Brazil.

Opposite — Professor John Murray.

Volume 3 of his Collected Writings includes an outstanding 158 page biography of the Professor by Iain Murray with 12 pages of photographs. Three of these are included in this issue with grateful acknowledgment to the Banner of Truth Trust.

more prominence to the need to speak the truth in love and also to maintain the fullest quota of unity possible within the framework of so many different evangelical groupings that exist.

The case of Paul reproving Peter (Gal. 2) is cited by some as if that confrontational approach should be the standard approach to all manifestations of error. There is a difference between a toe over the line and a whole body over the line. We must remember that the Jewish Gentile issue was the white hot subject of the apostolic era. Peter was a leading apostle of the Jewish party. The struggle was for unity

(Eph. chs. 2-4). All truth is to be earnestly contended for, but woe betide us if we lose our sense of priority and proportion and fail to act pastorally, discerningly and affectionately with all God's people. We should observe how Paul deals with the chaos that existed at Corinth. He calls the offender 'brothers' (1 Cor. 1:26, 2:1, 3:1, 10:1, 12:1, 15:1), and praises them for the little bit that they did get right (11:2). He does not compromise in any way in setting the truth before them, but he does not issue a threat on each issue as he travels through, that if they do not immediately conform he will have nothing more to do with them.

THE GREAT INVITATION

Introduction — *coming to Christ is simple yet profound*

PART 1 The great invitation as found in Isaiah 55

- 1 Isaiah's invitation to the thirsty
- 2 The universality of the invitation
- 3 Endless riches offered in the Gospel
- 4 The manner in which the invitation comes
- 5 Powerful reasons accompany the invitation

PART 2 The major invitation texts of the New Testament

- 1 The warrant of faith John 3:18
- 2 Christ knocking at the heart of sinners Rev. 3:20
- 3 The authority of Christ in his invitations Matthew 11:27
- 4 Christ's invitation to the weary Matthew 11:28
- 5 Christ's ambassadors to plead for reconciliation 2 Corinthians 5:20, 21
- 6 The last great invitation of the Bible Revelation 20:17

PART 3 The major truths that support the invitations

- 1 The new birth
- 2 Is there a preparatory work before the new birth?
- 3 The love of God for all mankind
- 4 The sincerity of the Gospel invitations
- 5 The responsibility of man

PART 4 Difficulties concerning the invitations

- 1 Calling for decisions
- 2 'Tetselite' altar-calling
- 3 Calling for decisions and co-operation in evangelism

PART 5 An historical perspective

- 1 The history of the question of the free offer
- 2 Some examples of invitation preaching

Last time David Kingdon defined assurance and opened up the subject with regard to the internality of the Spirit's testimony and the immediacy of the internal witness of the Spirit. He also expounded on the means used by the Holy Spirit to strengthen assurance. Here he concludes his exposition.

The Holy Spirit and Assurance

Having observed basic aspects of this subject we now need to examine an area which is very important today, namely, the sovereign will of the Holy Spirit.

The sovereign power of the Holy Spirit in his activities

Having established that the Holy Spirit is pleased to use means to seal to believers a sense of their sonship, I would also wish to emphasise that the Holy Spirit is sovereign and free, and therefore he can act without or beyond ordinary means. That is to say, he can visit a soul with a glorious sense of sonship even at a time when means are not being consciously employed with a view to obtaining assurance.

That such visitations are to be expected may be deduced from what our Lord teaches about the sovereign, mysterious working of the Holy Spirit in regeneration. 'The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know whence it comes or whither it goes; so it is with every one who is born of the Spirit' (John 3:8). If he so works in regeneration then surely he may so work in the realm of the assurance of salvation. While it would be going too far to interpret Paul's experience of being 'caught up into Paradise' (2 Cor. 12:3) as being his initial experience of assurance, it would seem likely that it was at least *an* experience of assurance, for the revelations he received were not for others, but for himself. 'He heard things which man may not utter' (v. 4). The intimate whispers of God to the soul are intimate. The communication to others would sully them in the telling. This experience both necessitated and prepared him for bearing the thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan (v. 7).

Now what is interesting is that Paul did not, so far as we know, seek such revelations. Rather, as he went on in the way of Christianity, God visited him and granted to him the experience which he describes. For his part, Paul was open to such visitations for he believed in God's sovereign freedom perhaps more than we do with our neat schematisations, especially in the area of pneumatology, which tend to put God in a strait-jacket, were such actually possible! Now, surely, we must maintain that God is as free today as in Paul's time, and therefore there is always the possibility that he will visit some of his children in his sovereignty independently of their use of means. However, this caution must be entered. God will not visit with such experiences those who walk carelessly, not making his Word the standard by which they live, for otherwise he would be giving assurance to presumptuous persons. 'Presumption' says Thomas Watson 'wants both the witness of the Word, and the seal of the Spirit'.¹⁴

Dr. Lloyd-Jones, in his exposition of Romans 8:5-17, entitled 'Sons of God' has some interesting comments to make on the subject of the Spirit's freedom to work as he pleases in bringing believers to a sense of their sonship. He points out that a text of Scripture may suddenly be brought to a man's mind which he has read before. 'Sometimes this experience happens to a man when he is not reading. Suddenly a word of Scripture that he has read before is brought into his mind. He is not thinking about it — he may actually be thinking about something quite different — but suddenly it is impressed upon his inner mind, and he becomes convinced that God loves him, and he is a child of God' (p. 306).

He goes on to state that 'assurance does not always come through Scripture. It has happened to many without words at all; it is just an inner consciousness in the spirit given by the Spirit of God himself, apart from Scripture' (p. 307). He argues that, in opposition to those who separate the Spirit from the Word 'we must not go to the extreme of saying that he can never deal with us immediately and directly, and without the Word, for he has often done so. In any case, take the case of the Romans to whom Paul was writing. They did not have the New Testament Scriptures, most of which had not been written, and certainly not in the form in which we have them. They were dependent upon preaching and exhortation. How then could they have known that the Spirit was testifying with their spirits if it happens exclusively through the Word?' (p. 307).

Dr. Lloyd-Jones quotes Spurgeon who, preaching upon Psalm 35:3 'Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation' on April 18, 1861 said:

God has a way of speaking without the Word, and without the ministers, to our hearts. His Spirit can drop like the rain and distil like the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb. We know not how it is, but sometimes there is a deep, sweet calm. Our conscience says, 'I have been washed in the blood of Christ', and the Spirit of God saith, 'Ay, 'tis true! 'tis true!' In such times we are so happy — so happy that we want to tell our joys — so blessed, that if we could but borrow angels' wings and fly away, we would scarce know the change when we passed through the pearly gates, for we have had heaven below, and there has been but little difference between that and heaven above.¹⁵

Now it should be emphasised that in no way are Dr. Lloyd-Jones and Spurgeon setting the Word and the Spirit in opposition, nor are they devaluing Scripture. They are simply saying that the Spirit can work, and does work, *apart* from the instrumentality of the Word. However, this is not the same as saying that he works *contrary* to the Word. He will not do this since being the author of the Word of God he will not contradict it in his testimony to the believer's heart. Hence no comfort is afforded to those who claim the testimony of the Spirit whilst living lives which contradict the commandments of the Word of God. Thomas Brooks insists that, 'Such as look and lean upon the hissing of the old serpent, may have a testimony that they are blessed, against the testimony of the Word; but wherever the Spirit of Christ gives iis testimony, it is always according to the Word. Look, as indenture answers to indenture, or as the counterpart exactly answers to the principal conveyance, there is article for

article, clause for clause, covenant for covenant, word for word — so does the testimony of the Spirit exactly answer to the testimony of the Word.¹⁶

Space forbids treatment of the ways in which the testimony of the Spirit may be distinguished from what Brooks so aptly calls ‘the hissing of the serpent’, although this is a vital area of pastoral theology, especially in these days of charismatic confusion and, unhappily, one fears, delusion as well. Those who are interested to follow up this issue should read pages 288-305 of Brooks’ treatise.

The sovereignty of the Spirit as to time

There remains yet another aspect of the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit to be considered. He is not only free and sovereign in the use or non-use of means; he is also sovereign in the times at which he works both to bestow a sense of sonship and to renew such.

The Puritan, Robert Asty, in his book *Rejoicing in the Lord Jesus in All Cases and Conditions* emphasises the sovereignty of God in the timing of the testimony of the Spirit in assurance:

The Lord is pleased to act as a sovereign in the sealing and assuring and comforting of his people. Sometimes he will come in upon a believer at his first conversion, and will fill him with joy and gladness that shall abide upon his soul many years; and sometimes the believer shall wait upon God from ordinance to ordinance, and follow him many years in the dark, and not have a discovery of his love. Sometimes the Lord will give a soul no sight of its interest (possession) nor evidence of its relation, until it come to die; and some believers have walked with the evidence of God’s love in their hearts almost all their days, and when they have come to die, they have died in the dark. Sense of interest (i.e., intuitive awareness of a share in the favour and grace of God) is under a sovereign dispensation, both as to the persons to whom it is given out, and as to time when, and as to the way and manner how.¹⁷

Why does the Spirit delay? Now if believers are sons, and as such ought to be persuaded of their sonship, why does God sometimes delay the work of the Spirit in witnessing to their spirits that they are children of God? Various reasons for the divine delay may be suggested. Firstly, as Thomas Brooks suggests ‘All believers do not see a like need of this testimony, they do not all alike observe it and make good use of it; and, therefore, it is no wonder if the Spirit be a witnessing Spirit to some and not to others.’¹⁸ In this respect the Spirit exercises his prerogative not to witness with the believer’s spirit until there is an ardent longing for assurance; until in the words of William Williams he is brought to pray:

*Tell me Thou art mine, O Saviour,
Grant an assurance dear;
Banish all my dark misgivings,
Still my doubting, calm my fear.*¹⁹

Second, God may delay bestowing a sense of sonship for the sake of the soul’s ultimate assurance. He may do so particularly to prove that a soul is his own by

drawing out of that soul love for himself even when there is no, or little, sense of his love to it. Joseph Symonds expounds this point with comforting effect when he says: 'When the truth of grace is evidenced clearly, it brings much comfort, and what greater evidence of an upright heart, than to follow God when he seems to fly away; and to love him when he seems to abhor and hate them; to weep upon him in love when he seems armed with the weapons of death; and to pour out the soul to him, when he seems to be pouring down fire and brimstone upon them.'²⁰

Such counsel was not, of course, meant to encourage a resting in a lack of assurance, but to encourage a patient seeking of God's favour in every possible way, 'for when in discouragement we cease to seek, we cease to have the considerable comfort and assurance in our very seeking'.²¹

A third reason why God may delay assurance is in order to get believers not to seek it for themselves, but for God's own honour and glory. How easy it is to seek for the consolation of assurance without being consumed with a desire for God's glory, and to desire, as Brooks says, 'joy without sorrow, comfort without torment, peace without trouble, sweet without bitter, light without darkness, and day without night, than that he may be exalted and admired, and his name alone made great and glorious in the world'.²² In a vivid simile Brooks drives home this point: 'Many Christians are like the bee that flies into the field to seek honey to eat, but brings it not into the master's hive. So they seek for assurance, that they may feed upon the sweet honeycomb, more than to fill their lord and master's hive with thanks and praise.'²³

Conclusion

It remains now to conclude by pointing out that, since assurance is very much concerned with the experimental side of the Christian religion, there is always the possibility of self-delusion on the ground of a claimed experience which does not relate to a transformed life. There is an 'assurance' of a kind which is not the assurance of faith wrought by the Holy Spirit, which lays claim to have 'tasted the heavenly gifts, and (to) have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and (to) have tasted the goodness of the word of God and powers of the age to come' (Heb. 6:4, 5), which is not that which belongs to salvation (v. 9), and which mercifully in this life, or tragically in the life to come, will be exposed in all its monstrous presumption. May God be pleased to save us from such, granting to us all a well-grounded assurance founded in the testimony of the Word conjoined with the testimony of the Holy Spirit.

Footnotes

¹⁴ op cit, p. 252.

¹⁵ Lloyd Jones, op cit, pp. 307, 308.

¹⁶ op cit, p. 303.

¹⁷ *Genius of Puritanism*, op cit, p. 72.

¹⁸ op cit, p. 300.

¹⁹ Lloyd Jones, op cit, p. 283.

²⁰ *Genius of Puritanism*, op cit, p. 75.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid., p. 35.

²³ Ibid., p. 36.

John Murray – Faithful and True

'Collected Writings of John Murray,' 4 volumes, The Banner of Truth, 1976-1983. A review article by Austin R. Walker.

Two memories of Professor John Murray remain indelibly printed upon my mind from my stay in the USA. On his last visit to Westminster Theological Seminary in 1969 a proud father presented his young son Logan to the Dining Club. The response was a long and spontaneous ovation from every student present. It was a token of the high regard the student body had for him. Then a day or so later, I heard him lecture on 'Jesus the Son of God'. I came to realise what a profound and gifted student of Scripture he was. I felt it something of a privilege to hear again a very gracious and learned Christian preacher and teacher.

In February of this year the fourth and concluding volume of his 'Collected Writings' was published by The Banner of Truth. The Christian public is indebted to their labours in making available this selection of his articles, lectures and sermons.

In these four volumes we find the professor's maturest thoughts. His over-riding concern was to be Biblical. This feature characterises his writings. Just a casual perusal through the volumes reflects how Scripture directed and permeated his thinking. After 37 years as a teacher of systematic theology he was busy revising his lectures and addresses prior to publication, so great was his concern to reflect the teaching of the Word of God. He was never simply an academic. His writings illustrate his own conviction that theology should be 'shot through with ardent devotion'. Even in the book reviews (in vols. 3 and 4) the reader can feel the zeal and reverence that he had for God's Word. Perhaps few will read them but they are

marked by acute perception and are models of Christian courtesy. He reviews not only works by such men as Warfield, but also many moderns who have undermined Biblical faith in one way or another.

A man of God and his ministry can never be divorced. So perhaps the best place for any reader to begin is volume 3. Here we find a 158 page 'Life of John Murray', written by Iain Murray (not related, the Murray clan is very large!). John Murray's life spanned two nations and three generations from 1898 to 1975. It records a fascinating and stimulating account. The last chapters are very moving. We see what made this man 'tick'. One cannot avoid being impressed with his humility. It characterised his life. As a young man in the 1920's he preached a sermon on John 3:29. What he said of John the Baptist coloured his own ambitions.

The desire for self-supremacy is an expression of the sin which above all others seeks to undermine the very purpose of the gospel and the gospel ministry, which is the restoration of the Kingdom of God, and the Kingdom of God is the rule and supremacy of God alone in all spheres and departments of life. May God grant that we follow in the footsteps of John and intimate his self-effacement, self-abasement, self-renunciation, self-forgetfulness (3, page 203).

This third volume contains a number of his sermons. The professor was not only a gifted theologian but he had a pastoral heart. Take for example the comforting words of a sermon delivered at the funeral of his close friend, William Matheson. He is preaching on the phrase 'asleep through Jesus'.

Nothing is more prejudicial to the adornment of the gospel and the manward expression of faith than *to be long on profession and short on integrity.*

On Obedience to the commandments of God, 1,184.

You know the tenderness, the love and the care with which a mother puts the infant to sleep. And it is just this that is true in a supereminent degree and on a transcendent plane with respect to Christ and his people. It is he who puts them to sleep. He attends their departure. When their time has come, in accordance with his own appointment, and with his own mediatorial Lordship, he puts them to sleep. That is the figure which the Scripture uses with reference to the death of the godly (3, 244).

Clear and firm convictions characterised his preaching too. Take his confidence in the perfection of Scripture.

... And note the apostle's universals — 'complete', 'thoroughly furnished', 'every good work'. It is completeness, thoroughness, and comprehensiveness all along the line. This is nothing less than the great truth of the perfection of Scripture. There is no situation in which we are placed, no demand that arises, for which Scripture as the deposit of the manifold wisdom of God is not adequate and sufficient (3, 261)

If you feel that the imprecatory psalms are inconsistent with the love displayed

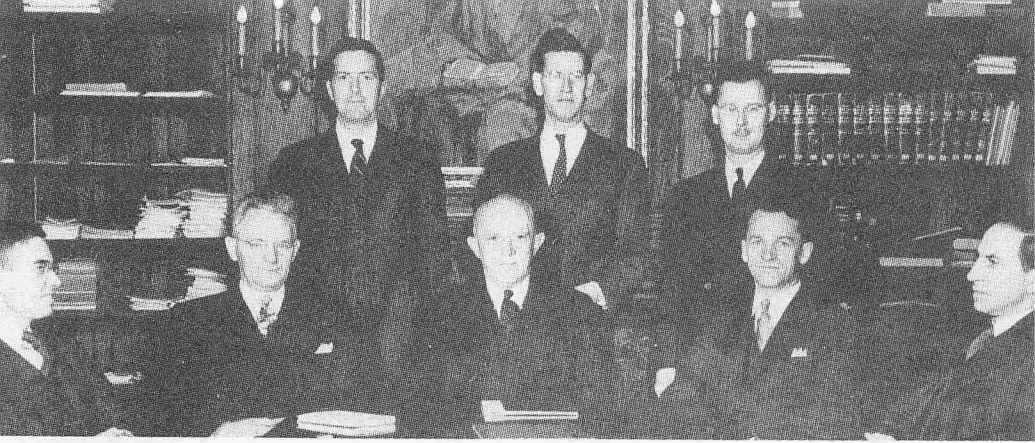
by Christ read his sermon in 1 Corinthians 16:22.

Love for men was also a characteristic of Murray's life. For example, in the late 1930's, at a time of turmoil in the church, he spent his summer months in New England seeking, along with others, to plant churches. There was considerable success. In volume 1 you can find six articles on various aspects of the proclamation of the gospel together with two articles on 'The Atonement and the Free Offer of the Gospel' and 'The Church and Mission'. In these days of confused evangelism his comments have a sharp cutting edge. For example he resisted any suggestion that certain doctrines are not fit subjects for evangelistic preaching — he included election, limited atonement and total depravity. He said,

The cause of evangelism has been greatly prejudiced and hindered by the supposition, far too prevalent, that for the lost the message had to be restricted to the central elements of the gospel, namely, sin, redemption by the blood of Christ, and the demand for faith and repentance (1, 125)

What was the Father's greatest gift, what was the most precious donation for us and to us? It was not things ... not calling ... not justification nor glorification. ... The incomparable gift is the *giving up* of his own Son. And not only was he given *for us*; he is also given *to us* in all the plenitude of his grace, and truth, and power, and love.

From a sermon on The Father's Love, 3,220.



The Westminster Faculty in 1947

Seated: Woolley, Van Til, Kuiper, Stonehouse, Murray. Standing: Skilton, Young and Kerr

In the same article he outlines four particular requisites of the message,

1. Conviction of Sin,
2. The Free Offer of the Gospel,
3. Human Need and Responsibility,
4. Christ Crucified and Risen.

Every Christian, not just pastors, would benefit from reading pages 119-162. Convictions would be strengthened, confidence in God and his message would be increased as we go about our evangelistic task.

Volume 1 comprises a series of short articles. Few are more than ten pages long, many are only four or five pages. They are intended for Christian readers in general. As with his other writings readers will find clarity of thought, breadth of vision, warmth and relevance. In an article entitled 'The Christian Ethic' he sums up the reason for its rejection.

Love to God is first.... Preoccupation today with inter-human relations is failing dismally in respect of good relations of the most elementary kind. Why? Because the priority in love is neglected. Why so much revolt against authority? Why is the sanctity of life so lamentably disregarded and, as an instance, the prevalence of abortion a shocking scandal for every sensitive soul? Why is the sanctity of sex so desecrated and the sanctuary reserved for marital rela-

tions subjected to wholesale invasion? Why has truth fallen in the street and equity cannot enter? It is because the sanction of the commandments as the ordinances of God has ceased to command human relations, and the reason for that is the absence of love to God. We have dragged God down to our level and have forgotten the incomparable in love — love to God with all the heart, and soul, and mind (1, 178-179).

Or finally take his Campbell Morgan Lecture, delivered at Westminster Chapel, London in 1958. Speaking of the heavenly, priestly activity of Christ he concludes that the sympathy of Christ is nothing less than 'omnipotent compassion' and shows how Christ's unchangeable priesthood ensures salvation to the uttermost meeting every conceivable need of the believer. All this he concludes,

... should cause us to be filled with holy and adoring amazement at the condescensions of trinitarian love and grace. And the effect will then be that we shall be humbled to the point of being speechless, in a true sense exasperated, at the thought of the intercession which is interjected to save us from the doom which our continuing sinfulness and unfaithfulness deserve, and saved to a glory which consists in glorification with Christ (1, 58).

We turn now to the two remaining

The facts are that the more intelligent, the deeper and the more unwavering the assurance of salvation is, the humbler, the more stable and the more circumspect will be the life, walk and conduct. Where closeness of fellowship with God is maintained, where the highest privileges of redemption are appropriated, there holiness, love and obedience must reign. The nearer to God the greater will be the love of his perfection and the more vehement the fear of offending him.

On Assurance of Faith, 2,269.

volumes. These contain his own selection of articles and lectures in systematic theology (volume 2) and other published, but long-out-of-print articles on theology (volume 4). There is little doubt that these will be far more demanding on the reader but no less rewarding. The professor is the kind of writer to whom the thoughtful and reflective Christian will return again and again and find fresh stimulation. Other teachers of systematic theology (like Hodge and Berkhof) have published their material in the form of a systematic theology. Murray resisted the encouragement to do so though his lectures at Westminster Seminary were 'published' by the student body with his permission. They were not to be regarded as published material however. He felt that his contribution was limited to relatively few subjects. Nevertheless these two volumes cover a wide range of various aspects of theology and rank among the best in Reformed theology. They are models of conciseness, lucidity and proportionate Biblical emphasis ideal for every preacher, teacher and student.

As a son of Scotland and the Free Presbyterian church he was thoroughly grounded in the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms. He never departed from the theology of the

Confession. His appreciation of it can be seen in volume 4, ch. 15. He did, of course, recognise that our understanding of the faith has progressed since 1646 and suggested some modifications and amendments to the Confession. Some of these modifications arose directly from his own contribution to Reformed theology. He emphasised though that the system of truth set forth in the confession,

is the doctrine which the church needs to confess and hold aloft today as much as in the seventeenth century (4, 261).

He was one of the first to appreciate the contribution of Geerhardus Vos to our understanding of the Scriptures. He regarded him as the most penetrating exegete he had known. Among important articles reflecting his interaction with true biblical theology is the one 'Systematic Theology', in volume 4.

What will be the greatest value to the church of these four volumes? The truth does not change, our understanding of it does. Each generation has its weaknesses, its imbalances, its obsessions. Our generation is no exception. Even in Christian circles there is a widespread tendency to minimise the importance of doctrine, learning and the authority of the Word of God.



Father and son, 1972

John Murray stood against this tide. He insisted that the Scriptures were the Word of God *written*. Listen finally to his words at the close of his inaugural address as Professor of Systematic Theology in 1939.

Oh, my friends, how precious it is that in this world of sin, with all its vagaries of unbelief, its fluctuating philosophies, its dim light which is darkness, and its wisdom that is foolishness with God, its bewilderment and despair, we have a sure word of prophecy, whereunto we do well in taking heed as unto a light that shineth in a dark place until the day dawn and the day-star arise in our hearts. How precious that we have a word divine, infallible and sufficient for the individual, for the family, for the church, for society, for the

commonwealth and even for the world! That is the implication of the apostle's word, 'instruction which is in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work' (4, 57).

From these convictions he did not flinch. Here lies the principal reason why these volumes will be of great value to the church. His theology was built upon this conviction. He sought in all he said to be Biblical and not to follow the latest theological fashions. Some have compromised the truth under pressure. The professor never did. As a devoted Christian, preacher, tutor, scholar and author he was faithful and true to the end, with the result that these his writings will be valuable and relevant until the end of time.

Ignatius of Antioch

by Gwynne Lloyd Williams

Ignatius is one of many great men from the early history of the Church whose lifestory is largely unknown today. As was pointed out in a brief study of his great contemporary, Polycarp,¹ this period is one about which little can be said with certainty. From the close of New Testament history to the dawn of the Reformation is a grey area. Nonetheless this should not be allowed to discourage us from a careful study of the period.

Over the centuries many have been impressed by the career of Ignatius, so much so that several enthusiasts invented stories about him to fill the gaps in our knowledge. The vast majority of such tales are bizarre to say the least. For example one claims that when Ignatius died the name 'Jesus' was found written in gold letters on his heart. Some four hundred letters in all purport to have been written by the man, of which but seven are genuine.

It is likely that Ignatius was born into a pagan family, somewhere near Antioch. The actual date of his birth is completely unknown.² Before his conversion Ignatius was an enemy of the Christians although the form which his opposition took is unclear. He was converted as an adult and almost certainly met the Apostle John.

Ignatius became bishop of Antioch sometime before the year A.D. 70. This was a prestigious city, ranking only behind Rome and Alexandria in importance. It was a flamboyantly rich area both in material and agricultural terms. Sadly it was also a bastion of immorality. Antioch had been blessed by the ministry of Paul and others, but most inhabitants preferred to ignore the Gospel. It was the Antiochians who first

came up with the term 'Christians' to describe the followers of the Way.

It would appear that the early years of Ignatius's bishoprick were relatively free from persecution. In early A.D. 98 Trajan became the new Roman Emperor. He was a fairly reasonable ruler in comparison to some who held that office. His major concern was stamping out corruption in the government and civil service; human nature hasn't changed! Trajan is important in church history because of his fourfold pronouncement on the attitude of the state towards Christians. He decreed:

1. Members of the Church were not to be harassed or subjected to any form of witch hunt.
2. Any person convicted of being a Christian was to be punished.
3. Any individual prepared to deny his Christian faith by praying to the Roman gods was to be forgiven.
4. The authorities were to pay no attention to anonymous charges.

It was under these guidelines that Ignatius was charged and found guilty of being a Christian. He was immediately sentenced to death. At this point a mystery arises for he was martyred at Rome, not at Antioch as might be expected. Two explanations have been offered for this strange occurrence. It could point to a reluctance on the part of the authorities in Antioch to cause undue civil disorder through the execution of a local leader. The obvious weakness in this argument is that the Christians simply did not go on the rampage whenever one of their number was killed. A more likely explanation is that the capital probably demanded a quota of prestigious outlaws for their notoriously bloody sports.

Ignatius then had to set out on the long journey to Rome. He and a few other prisoners travelled under armed guard. They went first to Smyrna where they rested for a while. Here Ignatius met the godly Polycarp who was also destined to meet a martyr's death. Fellowship between the two bishops was clearly very sweet. Ignatius also met the representatives of other local churches while he was at Smyrna, and at Troas, a later stopping place. Six of these churches and Polycarp were later to receive personal letters from Ignatius.

These letters are very important sources of information on the early Church. Anyone reading these documents³ is certain to be struck by the abrupt and rather dogmatic style in which they have been written. It is therefore important to remember that these are not the orderly thoughts of an armchair theologian. Rather they are the passionate final instructions of a warm, loving pastor on his way to certain death.

Two themes are noticeably dominant in his letters. One is an attack on the Docetic heresy and the other is an emphasis on the importance of church officers. As will be seen, these strands are closely connected.

Docetics held that Jesus Christ was not God incarnate. They believed that he was true God but that he only appeared to be a human being. The reason for this distortion of New Testament theology was that the Docetics saw flesh as synonymous with sin. Ignatius was rightly horrified by Doceticism and his letters are full of characteristically vigorous attacks on it. A typical passage comes from the letter to the Smyrnaeans: 'I know and believe that (Jesus) was in real human flesh, even after his resurrection.'

Ignatius realised that such heresies were certain to plague the church from time to time. His major antidote to them was for Christians to give complete

allegiance to the office holders in their local church. His letters speak of a three fold ministry: Deacons, Presbyters and a single Bishop. Ignatius laid a special emphasis on this last office, maintaining that only the Bishop or his delegate could conduct a service of baptism or communion.

Many writers have misinterpreted this emphasis, often out of prejudice. It is perhaps important to recall the exact nature of the office of Bishop in the Second Century Church. He was an officer of the Church, appointed by election and having authority only in the place of his election. Bishops were unpaid and normally undertook secular work to support themselves and their families. The office of Bishop was in fact much nearer that of a Twentieth Century pastor than an Episcopalian Bishop.

When seen in this context, Ignatius's emphasis on the importance of obedience to the church officers can be seen for what it was, namely practical advice from a loving pastor. Indeed this emphasis is needed as much today as it ever was in Ignatius's day. It is both Scriptural and more profitable for Christians to be involved in their local churches than to be constantly throwing in their lot with extra church activities. The attractive personalities, loud music and flashy publicity of such events may appeal to the carnal. It is the regular, reliable, faithful work of the local church which has been ordained of God.

Having written his letters, Ignatius was finally taken to the Colosseum at Rome. This vast concrete and stone structure held some 50,000 spectators. There they enjoyed the spectacle of man fighting fellow man, or man fighting beast to death. It was a cruel, heartless place, but Ignatius met it with a strength not his own. Among his final words were these. 'I thank you O Lord for honouring me in this way.'

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First Southern Baptist Founders' Conference

August 2nd, 1983, was a very important date for many Southern Baptists as it marked the date of the first Southern Founders Conference. This meeting grew out of a prayer meeting of several men who met in Fort Worth, Texas, to discuss getting the pastors of Southern Baptist churches together who believe and preach the doctrines of Grace. This became a reality as men and women from twenty different states and one missionary from Mexico met at Southwestern College in Memphis, Tennessee. The Conference began at 3.45 p.m. on August 2nd with a paper on 'The Doctrines of Grace in Baptist History' by Dr. Tom Nettles, professor of church history at Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary in Memphis, Tennessee. Dr. Nettles set the tone as well as the theme of the conference in reminding us all that historically, as well as Biblically, these doctrines constituted the faith of our Fathers.

It is a common experience for those who first came to embrace sovereign grace to wonder if there is anyone else. Many at this gathering had felt some isolation but expressed surprise to find out how many there were who embraced and preached these doctrines. The Conference gave evidence that there is

definitely a revival of these truths among Southern Baptists. The fact that twenty different states were represented gives testimony that this is not a movement centred around a personality or a programme. We believe it to be a spontaneous work of the Holy Spirit directing many to the solid Biblical foundations embraced by our Southern Baptist founding fathers over a century ago. During the Conference one of the speakers asked for those who had come to believe the Doctrines of Grace in the 1960's, 1970's, and 1980's. Most hands were raised for the 1980's, giving further proof of the fact of a growing revival among Southern Baptist pastors.

The longing of every pastor who attended was to see the great Biblical doctrines which were once clearly proclaimed by our Baptist fathers sound forth from our Baptist pulpits and thunder through America once again. If there is to be true and genuine revival there must be a true reformation in the message being preached.

Conference dates have already been set for next year, July 31st-August 3rd, 1984. Interested persons can contact Ernest Reisinger at 1101 Northeast 33rd Street, Pompano Beach, Florida 33064.

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By the time that the beasts had finished with him, only a few bones were left of the old saint. These were gathered together and buried in Antioch by some of his friends. So ended the life of a loving and gracious pastor whose writings are still relevant today.

Footnotes

¹ See 'Polycarp of Smyrna' *Reformation Today* No. 67.

² It is impossible to date any event in his life with certainty. Only one of his letters is dated, but that is not much help, for the date is August 24th!

³ They are available in an English translation in Penguin. 'Early Christian Writings,' 1968, and later reprints.

The first Reformed Conference in Brazil

Three principal groups make up the main corpus of evangelical believers in Brazil: the Presbyterians, the Assemblies of God and the Baptists. The volume of Reformed books and booklets in Portuguese is limited. There are very few substantial commentaries. Most offerings are of the small paperback size: Wilson on *Romans*, *Studies in Psalm 73* by Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Right with God* by Blanchard, *Today's Gospel* by Chantry and Spurgeon's *Lectures to my Students* in three paperback volumes. These light armoured vehicles are accompanied by infantry in the form of booklets. Some of the booklets are: *The Carnal Christian* by Ernest Reisenger, *Growth in Grace* by John Newton, *What is a Christian?* by Wayne Mack and *The implications of Calvinism* by Al Martin.

Ron Edmonds has been at work in Brazil by sowing and cultivating with literature using the few available materials in Portuguese. He has sent materials to evangelicals of all kinds including Methodists. In some cases this has led to correspondence.

The catalyst by way of organizing a conference came when a pastor, Valter Martins, wrote to Ron expressing his deep appreciation for Pink's exposition, *The Sovereignty of God*. The Pilgrim Church at Long Beach sent clothes to Valter to assist him in meeting the needs of the very poor. Also 500 dollars was donated to help in the inauguration of a conference which took place on a Sunday, Monday and Tuesday in July this year. Two men travelled 15 hours by bus and another 12 hours. About 120 attended. Unhappily Ron was the only Baptist present. He contributed by speaking on the subject of the Sovereign

will of God and the will of man and also on the nature of God's grace, being much helped by the eagerness and appreciation of those present and assisted by flawless translation into Portuguese. A large volume of literature was sold at the conference.

The reluctance of the Baptists to attend is due to the treatment meted out to Baptists during the Reformation period and of course to the different concept of church membership. It is a very great pity that the Adversary should be able to exploit the perpetuation of a rift by which Baptists are discouraged from the benefit of expository writings of a high order. We do not have to become Presbyterians to embrace the 1689 Confession! Baptists in Brazil have evidently not ventured far enough to grasp something as basic as that, but then the paucity of reading material must account for this ignorance.

One Baptist pastor who would certainly have attended the conference could not do so because of the demands of his secular work. Even though he has a fairly large congregation the people are very poor. Poverty is a hindrance in many churches but it is the view of some observers that the advantages of sacrifice to free pastors to full-time labour have not been properly recognised. The people would readily respond to the challenge which is better presented by mature and experienced pastors who visit from abroad.

The spiritual needs are so varied and so pressing that one could easily become depressed by the situation. That has to be resisted, and determination exerted, to accomplish good even if it seems like a few drops in an ocean.

Impressions of South Africa

The Annual Evangelical and Reformed Studies Conference took place at its usual picturesque venue of Skogheim, Port Shepstone, which is about 100 miles south of Durban on the Natal coast. Over 100 gathered for the Conference which was held from July 8th to 12th. What a blessing are such occasions when the people of God can meet and enjoy sweet fellowship in the Gospel. Skogheim is A Family Conference and therefore we had the joy of seeing wives and children as well as husbands sitting under the sound of the Word. The reformed community in Britain is not yet alive enough to the potential of families in our Conferences. It was particularly encouraging to see the young men at Skogheim, a number of them prayerfully considering the ministry for themselves. What value there was in these young men mixing with the Ministers and conversing on the things of God. I wondered if the fast closed door at Leicester, and half open door at Carey (for Pastors and Elders) could not be opened in some way to welcome serious minded young men willing to go to such a Conference. Maybe it is not as difficult as we say. Even if it were limited to one per Church, on the recommendation of the Minister, a lot could be done amongst us. A young man desiring to be at a reformed conference is no guarantee of a preaching gift but it may do more than a little to awaken something that God has put within him.

My sense of responsibility in ministering at Skogheim was greatly heightened with the knowledge that some of those good folk had travelled over a thousand miles to be present. I was given five sessions and dealt with the subject of 'Spiritual Conflict', expounding I Peter 5:8-9. Other Speakers were Clive Tyler of the Bible Institute, who dealt with the subject of 'Martin Luther and Mysticism', Martin Holdt of Constantia Park who challenged us with the subject 'The Christian's Private Devotional Life', John Newby of Leondale who dealt with 'Paul's Praying and Preaching' from Romans 1, Bernard Wright of Johannesburg who spoke on 'The Gospel

of All Nations', Fred Arnot of Durban who expounded Psalm 138 and Bernard Cartledge of Cape Town conducted the Morning Service. He reminded us most helpfully of God's approach to his people in grace. Jim Van Zyl gave a paper on 'The Christian and Worldliness'. This provoked almost as much discussion as Clive Tyler's on Martin Luther.

Plans are in hand for the next two years of 'Skogheim'. We wish it the blessing of God. In a land so vast as South Africa we may say, 'What are these among so many?' But we are not unmindful that God is sovereign who can make 'one to chase a thousand'. There is enough ability and enthusiasm among these good people to make a considerable contribution to the reformed testimony in South Africa. May every effort be made to explore ways to widen the influence of the Conference. As in this country there is a danger of becoming sound in doctrine to the exclusion of application. Especially is this true in the field of evangelism. Standing in pulpits preaching the gospel to the imaginary unconverted is not enough. Reformed theology must lead to reformed methods. We deplore the methods of entertainment evangelism but so often we are merely standing on the sidelines proving ourselves to be expert critics. It seems that the Apostles never had any difficulty in reaching the unconverted because they just went and preached the Gospel where they were. This is no guarantee of conversions but it is a guarantee of contact. It fulfils what the Master told us in respect of the highways and byways. We all believe in evangelism but are considering it, planning it, praying about it, preaching about it, training for it, feeling guilty about it — but very few churches are actually doing it on anything approaching a regular and organised basis. We should not fear real spiritual dynamism in Gospel work. What a need we have not only to admire William Carey but to see men called from our number to go and do what he did.

I found the South Africans so like the Irish in their intense interest in politics. People

everywhere, I found, were eager to talk about — 'the political situation'. Some busied themselves explaining it, some defended it, others were quite evidently embarrassed by it. All acknowledged that many and far reaching changes are taking place. What wisdom the people of God need to see everything through Bible eyes and be delivered from prejudice and mere tradition.

The first weekend was spent in the Pretoria — Johannesburg area where I enjoyed sweet and precious Christian fellowship with some of the members of Constantia Park Baptist Church. Preaching twice for them and being welcomed into a number of their homes gave opportunity to see something of the fine work that is being established. Martin Holdt and the Elders there are laying an excellent foundation. It is to be hoped that other churches can be established with the same degree of wisdom, enthusiasm and doctrinal clarity. It would be a healthy sign to see Constantia Parks emerging all over South Africa. May this relatively new Church be a means of encouragement to many.

The Anglicans in the country are in two camps. The Church of the Province appears to be the traditional Anglicanism we would know with a large modernistic influence. The Church of England in South Africa, a separate denomination, is thoroughly evangelical, with a substantial reformed contingent. I preached at one of their churches, St. James, Cape Town, and found the Service more free than almost any Free church I have been in. I was warned that the singing would be somewhat lively. That was an understatement! But I was given 45 minutes to preach to the 1,000 strong congregation. At the Bible Study of the same Church — at which about 400 were present — the singing was only 7 minutes in duration and I was given an hour to preach. The bookstall would have passed any examination and the impression was of a good work. The ultra modern and informal atmosphere had everybody 'greet each other with a big smile and a handshake', and, to be honest, that is much more than you would get in many of our churches. Misguidedly, the absence of such things apparently contri-

butes to the soundness of some assemblies, or so it would appear.

My enquiries into the percentage of black people under reformed teaching seemed to reveal little, though maybe I was not asking at the right source. All the churches I preached in were multi-racial, though apart from one it seemed to do little to bring the different cultures together. This, no doubt, is blamed on the laws of the land, but this is hardly the case. There have never been any laws in Dudley separating the races, and we have every colour under heaven in town, but apart from a small, though growing group, we have great difficulty in drawing people out of their cultural backgrounds, even Christians.

What an impression of space there is in South Africa. Travelling through Zululand I was face to face with the Africa I had always imagined as a boy. There is still so much that has not changed. My admiration for those mighty heroes of the Cross who walked through this land preaching the glorious Gospel of the blessed God increased as I felt the enormity of the distances. Though even in a country as large as South Africa I still managed, in a small Cape village, to bump into John Macleod, Moderator of the Free Church of Scotland.

My last week was spent in the hospitable home of Clive and Lillian Tyler at the Bible Institute where Clive is Principal. It is situated in a glorious spot in Kalk Bay in the Cape Peninsula. It was most heartening to hear of developments at the Institute and to feel something of the potential. There are 65 students at present and there is every indication of an increasing sphere of usefulness. How vital that the essential spirituality of would-be learners is maintained. Halls of learning can often chill the soul. But we can rejoice that it is not necessarily so. We have abundant testimony that learning and a close walk with God are completely compatible. But sometimes our doctrinal stance appears to rob us of fire, as if we fear that some of our brethren will think us something less than orthodox if we get excited about truth and even frown if we do something startling in

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The love of God for all mankind

WE can be sure that we will not be disposed to invite wayward transgressors to Christ, or reason with them, or bring to them the overtures of the Gospel, unless we are convinced that God is favourably disposed to them. Only if we are genuinely persuaded that he will have them to be saved are we likely to make the effort. If God does not love them it is hardly likely that we will make it our business to love them. Especially is this the case when there is so much that is repulsive in the ungodliness and sinfulness of Christ-rejectors. No doubt should be left in our minds about this matter when we are assured of the reason why Christ would have us love our enemies,

You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect. Mt. 5:43-48.

The love of God is not confined to words only. He sends the sun to warm the unrighteous and the rain to water their crops. This benevolence which springs from God's goodness and love is shown toward mankind as a body, to all men as a class, as it says in the text cited above, 'to the righteous and the unrighteous'.

It is important to bear this in mind as a general principle because of the difficulties that arise. For instance how can we say God loves all men when the psalms tell us that he hates the worker of iniquity (Ps. 5:5)? How can we maintain that God loves all when Paul says that he bears the objects of his wrath, being fitted for destruction, with great patience (Rom. 9:22)? Even more how can we possibly accept that God loves all men without exception when we survey the acts of God's wrath in history? Think of the deluge which destroyed all but one family. Think of Sodom and Gomorrah. With so specific a chapter as Romans, one which declares that sodomy is a sign of reprobation, could we possibly maintain that God loved the population of

an attempt to get others excited as well. May the Spirit of God fill all teachers in Bible Colleges and enable them to mix zeal with knowledge and impart enthusiasm.

Let us pray for South Africa with its enormous potential. Especially should we follow the injunction of Paul to pray for

those who lead in government (1 Tim. 2:2). May great wisdom be given to those who lead the nations today, that all the people may be provided for, that peace might prevail, and every opportunity used by the churches that the earth may be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

Alun McNabb.

the two cities destroyed by fire? How can we possibly reconcile God's love and his wrath? Would we deny the profundity of this problem? We can observe, however, that the co-existence of the attributes of love and wrath is illustrated by our own experience. We often experience love and indignation at the same time. In fact the more we love people the greater is our indignation and hurt when they sin. There is no question about the fact that love and hatred run concurrently. We may dearly love friends while utterly detesting their ungodly attitudes. If as limited mortals we can experience this duality (I use that word for want of a better one), how much more the infinite God whose ways and thoughts are as high above ours as the sky is above the earth.

If we look back at the deluge referred to we will see that God's wrath came after a long period in which opportunity was given to repent. Peter tells us that Noah was a preacher of righteousness and Genesis speaks of God's Spirit striving and contending with men, and of the LORD being grieved, and his heart being filled with pain (Gen. 6:3-5). The text suggests that there was a limit of 120 years to God's longsuffering before the deluge (Gen. 6:3, 1 Pet. 3:20).

Isaiah explains that the judgments of God's wrath come because of disobedience and the violation of his laws (Is. 24:4-6). There is a sequence of events; disobedience, warning and entreaty to repentance, then further rebellion and guilt incurred followed by yet further remonstrance and pleading to repent. Again there is still more rebellion and transgression and still more remonstrance, until at last the day of grace is sinned away and nothing is left but God's wrath (Rom. 1).

When we bear this in mind we can understand that there are those who at this moment are about to reap what they have sown. They are workers of iniquity whom God hates. He has shown his love to them but they have shunned him and now there is no more remedy. A man who remains stiff-necked after many rebukes will suddenly be destroyed – without remedy (Prov. 29:1).

Providing we make allowances for a wide variety of individuals and different situations varying in degrees of sin and guilt it is correct to say that God loves all men. However, we can reject that ridiculous saying used by some in soulwinning efforts when they say to an unbeliever, 'God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life'. The bypassing in this way of the subject of sin and guilt, and the necessity of repentance, is irresponsible. To say that God loves you, and if you repent and trust in him he will change your life, is correct. It is helpful to recall the way in which our Lord spoke to the seeking rich young ruler. He confronted him with the reality of the ten commandments. He also showed him that the cost of discipleship would, in

his case, require the abandonment of his love of his possessions and wealth.

The benevolent love of God defined

In a way we have defined this love already by calling it benevolent love, a love that does good to its subjects. This is distinguished from complacent love which is that love which delights in its objects. The complacent love of God is promised by our Lord to those who keep his commandments (Jn. 14:23, 24). The more we are conformed to Christ the greater is God's love of delight which comes to consummation in our final redemption (Zeph. 3:17, Mal. 3:17). This love of complacency can be called the love of adoption for it is expressed toward and lavished upon the sons and daughters of God. They are the subjects of his joy and pleasure (1 Jn. 3:1, Rom. 8:32).

By contrast benevolent love is expressed toward those who are antagonistic, the unreconciled and the unrepentant. This love of benevolence is described as 'the riches of his kindness' – a kindness of 'giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons'. It is a love which provides liberally so that the hearts of men are filled with joy (Rom. 2:4, Acts 14:17).

How extensive is this love of benevolence? It is very great as it brought about the giving of God's Son. 'For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son' (Jn. 3:16). The world loved is the world in all the degradation and ugliness of its sin. The love expressed by the term 'so loved' is a love so intense that it was not deterred by the sinfulness of its objects.¹ This is the love referred to when Paul commends God's love, 'But God demonstrates his own love for us in this, While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us' (Rom. 5:8). The marvel of God's love is that in spite of his hatred and abhorrence of sin his love could overcome that. A rebellious world is hard to love, but to love that world to such an extent as to give his one and only son for it, that is love indeed. Hence: 'so loved as to give'. John 3:16 does not say that God loves all men alike and deals with all in the same way. There are those who believe and those who do not. There is a love of God which follows his love of benevolence for this world of sinners as a whole which is a love which irresistibly works salvation. God's electing love follows his love of benevolence and achieves salvation in spite of all the opposition and all barriers.

There are a number of Scriptures such as John 10:11 in which particularity is taught – 'I lay down my life for my sheep' and John 6:37, 'All that the Father gives me will come to me.'

God's love of benevolence on its own does not save a single person. For that reason it is equated with what is called common grace. The word 'common' is used because it implies something which is common to all men. The Greek word *charis* meaning grace, with its Hebrew equivalent *chen* or

channum, means a favourable disposition or kindness. We understand by the way the word *charis* is employed in the New Testament that it is specifically favour exercised toward the undeserving, the unworthy and those antagonistic toward it. An example is Titus 2:11, 'For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men'. That God should be kindly disposed to a world that hates him so as to bring the Gospel of good news to them all is gracious, and that he should go further and actually apply that Gospel in such a way as to rescue men and transform them is marvellous. The grand end of the whole scheme of redemption is to display the glory of God's grace (Eph. 2:6).

The connection between God's benevolent love and the invitation of the Gospel

We have been seeing how God's benevolent love extends to fallen mankind as a whole. We have seen that this is demonstrated in the provision of fruitful seasons and benefits of all kinds. Presently we will look at the riches of these provisions and see how far reaching and extensive they are. Now someone may well say that it is all very well to provide benefits but what about the all important matter of salvation? Does God desire the very highest good for man, that is his eternal salvation? The answer to that question is provided in the clearest way by the apostle Paul in Romans 2:4 where he makes it plain that the object or exercise of the riches of God's goodness applied over a long period of patience is that men might come to repentance.

There are other passages too in which the will of God is expressed in unmistakable terms. He has no pleasure in the destruction and punishment of the wicked (Ez. 18:32, 33:11). In some passages what we call the optative mood is employed. The optative expresses wish or desire. Let us look at some examples.

If only you had paid attention to my commands your peace would have been like a river (Is. 48:18).

If my people would but listen to me, if Israel would follow my ways, how quickly would I subdue their enemies (Ps. 81:13).

Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep all my commands always, so that it might go well with them and their children forever! (Deut. 5:29).

If only they were wise and understood this and discern what their end will be! (Deut. 32:29).

Consistent with these expressions of goodwill we have the tears of Christ which he wept over Jerusalem and his lament over Jerusalem. 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing' (Matt. 23:37). By these

expressions, acts, and even tears, we are left in no doubt that the desire and will of God is for man's highest good, that is his eternal salvation through heeding the Gospel of Christ. The invitations of the Gospel must be proclaimed and presented with fervour commensurate with the goodwill of God. As was suggested at the beginning, we will hardly be enthusiastic about the salvation of men if God himself is not enthusiastic and wholeheartedly concerned about it.

How God's benevolent love or common grace was first expressed

The goodness of God to this fallen world is so great that it is often completely misconstrued. Many argue that there is so much goodness to be seen by way of justice, care, provision and education that it is too much to believe that God's wrath is upon a sin-cursed depraved world. Again many hold the view that the criminal element, although increasing, is still a small minority and that most people are decent, upright, reliable, honest and kind.

The Biblical response to that surely is that all the good expressed in this world has our creator God as its source and fountain. All benevolence flows from one source only and that is the Father of goodness. This can be seen by going back to the fall. When Adam fell God could have cut him off immediately. He did not. He punished him partially, postponed his physical death and put him on probation as to whether he would be spiritually saved or not. As the race multiplied so sin increased in extent and severity. Very soon the first murder took place. Again Cain could justly have been executed immediately but he was not. He was punished but at the same time a mark was put upon him whereby others would be restrained from killing him. Then in the same chapter (Genesis 4) we learn that right from the beginning fallen mankind was endued with culture, music, skill in farming, and in industry, even to the ability of forging tools out of bronze and iron.

The foundation of the exercise of God's benevolent love or common grace

Following the flood Noah built an altar and sacrificed burnt offerings on it. The LORD smelled the pleasing aroma and said in his heart;

Never again will I curse the ground because of man, even though every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood. And never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done.

*As long as the earth endures,
seedtime and harvest,
cold and heat,
summer and winter,
day and night
will never cease (Gen. 8:20-22)*

All acceptable sacrifices in the Old Testament as types point to the antitype,

namely the one perfect sacrifice of Christ. I conclude therefore that the post-diluvian covenant made with Noah as the representative of mankind was based on the merits of Christ.

This covenant with Noah bears a distinctively universalistic character. It is cosmic in its proportions. It is made with every living creature. All benefit from it who live under the sign of the rainbow which arches over the whole world.

This covenant can appropriately be called the covenant of common or universal grace. It is essential that there be such a covenant if God's wrath is not again to be poured out on a universal scale as was the case with the deluge. There will be a terminus or end of the world when all will be judged, but until that time the terms of the post-diluvian covenant apply.

That Christ's sacrifice is the basis of this covenant prompts the observation that the innumerable benefits that accrue to all men, saved and unsaved, elect and non-elect, accrue on account of Christ's merit. The death of Christ not only secures the redemption of all those the Father has given him but from that death flows a river of secondary benefits and blessings almost beyond computation.²

Having considered the foundation of common grace it will be helpful to open up the negative and positive categories in which this universal favour is expressed, firstly as restraint from evil, and secondly enduement with good.

Restraint from evil

By means of working through conscience which is enlightened by laws and by the example of others, sin is prevented from breaking out in a way which would engulf mankind. It is not difficult to imagine the holocaust to which we would all be subject if God did not work in the minds and conscience of souls everywhere. As it is, wars are always going on, tribe versus tribe in Africa, the privileged versus the deprived in Central and South American countries, civil war in Lebanon, Iraq at war with Iran and by the time you read this, it is probable that other conflicts unhappily will have broken out.

Jonathan Edwards expressed the truth about sin in man's heart vividly but fairly when he wrote, 'There are in the souls of wicked men those hellish principles reigning, that would presently kindle and flame out into hell-fire, if it were not for God's restraints. There is laid in the very nature of carnal men, a foundation for the torments of hell: there are those corrupt principles, in reigning power in them, and in full possession of them, that are the beginnings of hell-fire. These principles are active and powerful, exceeding violent in their nature, and if it were not for the restraining hand

of God upon them, they would soon break out, they would flame out after the same manner as the same corruptions, the same enmity does in the hearts of damned souls, and would beget the same torments in them as they do in them. The souls of the wicked are in Scripture compared to the troubled sea, Isaiah 57:20. For the present, God restrains their wickedness by his mighty power, as he does the raging waves of the troubled sea, saying, "Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further;" but if God should withdraw that restraining power, it would soon carry all before it. Sin is the ruin and misery of the soul; it is destructive in its nature; and if God should leave it without restraint, there would need nothing else to make the soul perfectly miserable. The corruption of the heart of man is a thing that is immoderate and boundless in its fury; and while wicked men live here, it is like fire pent up by God's restraints, whereas if it were let loose, it would set on fire the course of nature; and as the heart is now a sink of sin, so, if sin was not restrained, it would immediately turn the soul into a fiery oven, or a furnace of fire and brimstone.³

Let us say that everywhere and at all times the Holy Spirit is striving with men to prevent them from indulging in sin, striving with them to subdue their passions, striving with them to repent and believe the Gospel. Everywhere and at all times the Holy Spirit is at work in the rulers of this world, reducing the borders of conflict, calming furies, cooling tempers, reducing tensions, circumventing disasters, reminding leaders of the fatal consequences of world war. Oh where would we be by now were it not for him who works ceaselessly in men to restrain their pride and their passion?

As a powerful means to keep order and stay violence God has given civil government to the nations (Rom. 13:1-4). Where such order is absent genocide is the order of the day. Sometimes one group exterminates another without trace. Civil governments can become appallingly corrupt and abuse their power, but if we sit down and list the ongoing active programmes of local governments we will discover the scale of their positive work to be enormous. Likewise the prevention and discouragement of crime and evil by police and armed forces is much greater than we imagine. We are commanded to pray for kings and all those in authority that we may live peaceful and quiet lives. Such conditions favour the prevalence of the Gospel by which God wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4).

There are some striking cases of common grace at work in rulers. Take Ahab who for profligacy and wickedness had no equal. 'There was never a man like Ahab, who sold himself to do evil in the eyes of the LORD, urged on by Jezebel his wife. He behaved himself in the vilest manner' (1 Kings 21:25).

Yet when Elijah denounced him and prophesied severe judgment from God against him he tore his clothes, lay in sackcloth and went around meekly. Following this we read that the LORD came to Elijah and said, 'Have you noticed how Ahab has humbled himself before me? Because he has humbled himself, I will not bring this disaster in his day, but I will bring it on his house in the days of his son' (1 Kings 21:29).

Another example is that of Sennacherib who derided the LORD in a blasphemous way heaping insults upon him. Sennacherib was restrained from this later to be assassinated by his own sons while worshipping his idol god Nisroch. Note how this monarch was dealt with:

*'But I know where you stay
and when you come and go
and how you rage against me.
Because you rage against me
and your insolence has reached my ears.
I will put my hook in your nose
and my bit in your mouth,
and I will make you return
by the way you came' (2 Kings 19:27, 28)*

A personal incidence of restraint which must surely illustrate countless others is reported in Genesis concerning a ruler by the name of Abimilech. He had plans to sleep with Sarah, Abraham's wife. His guilt was reduced inasmuch as he had been lied to by Abraham. He had been led to believe that Sarah was Abraham's sister. Nevertheless the Lord intervened to prevent disaster and actually said to Abimilech, 'I have kept you from sinning against me. That is why I did not let you touch her' (Gen. 20:6).

The bestowal of good

Imagine yourself in charge of organising a conducted tour of this world for visitors from another planet. It would be possible to arrange the tour in such a way that they would never think this world had been subject to a cataclysmic fall. The best spots set in exquisitely beautiful surroundings could be chosen: universities and colleges, institutions of learning, parliaments, libraries, seminaries, museums, research laboratories and hospitals. The visitors could be shown some of the marvels of science and technology and how these are being used to harness power for noble ends. Then there is the sphere of medical research, the care of the sick and needy. The visitors could be taken to art galleries and treated to the best orchestral concerts exhibiting the unity and harmony of highly skilled and professional musicians. They might also be impressed by a bird's eye view of the travel systems of this world, great ocean going vessels plying the seas in a constant mission of supply; jumbo jets in a patchwork of routes across the skies ferrying hosts of passengers from nation to nation.

None of these noble, excellent and praiseworthy bounties of God's benevolence are to be seen in the corridors of hell. There is no love to relieve the ghastly rule of hatred in the habitations of fallen angels. There is no favour shown to devils. There is no love of benevolence restraining evil and promoting good in the lake of fire. There in that lake writhe the rebellious, tormenting each other, afflicted by the presence of Lucifer who himself is subject to the eternal wrath of God. There is no common grace in the domain of demons, no culture, no soft music to soothe, no sympathy, no further opportunity to repent.

Also to be observed is the fact that when God removes his restraints and his provisions of good this world soon resembles hell. Recall some of the atrocities of the last war, the gas chambers and the exterminations of six million Jews. Not far removed were Stalin's prison camps (The Gulag Archipelago) in which millions perished. Nor have hideous barbarities ceased since that time. We only need recall the names of Cambodia, Vietnam and Uganda to be reminded of man's inhumanity to man. We should never take God's common grace for granted and never account his goodness to our own credit. We must never forget that it is of the Lord that so many are absorbed in expending their energies on worthy projects which contribute to the wellbeing of society. In this way we are preserved from many evil conspiracies. I believe that the coming day of judgment in which things now hidden will be revealed, that we will see then the remarkable extent to which mankind generally and individuals in particular have been preserved from disaster.

The bestowal of good has been referred to in general terms. It will be helpful to refer to striking instances of this as reported in Scripture. Recall Pharaoh's daughter who contrary to Pharaoh's decree was happy to rescue Moses and bring him up in an environment rich with common grace, by which he became well equipped for his role as leader in later life.

Pagan people are capable of outstanding hospitality and generosity as we see reported in the last chapter of Acts where Luke describes the unusual kindness shown to the 276 who having just narrowly escaped death arrived in a destitute condition. That reminds us of 1 Timothy 4:10 which says that God is the Saviour, meaning preserver or sustainer, of all men, but especially of those who believe.

Important conclusions concerning the benevolent love of God

One writer referred to God's benevolent love or common grace as 'earlier grace'.⁴ This suggests the idea of prevenient grace or grace that goes before or precedes. If the divine provision and forbearance did not go before how could there be salvation? A major conclusion which I would make is that

the preaching of the Gospel throughout the world is possible because a time of probation has been provided. During this probation God shows his love, goodwill and sincerity, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance (1 Tim. 2:4, 2 Pet. 3:9). It is helpful to draw attention to these facts and to avoid misunderstandings. The most popular misunderstanding is that this goodness can be taken for granted, that is to suppose from the goodness that nothing is wrong (Rom. 2:4). The whole purpose of universal common favour is to encourage repentance. Another very popular misunderstanding is to think that man himself is the author of this goodness. Look how kind and good men are! Yes, we reply, it is a derived goodness and it is one which without God has self at the centre. If man's goodness is pleaded as a source of merit it will be rejected as self-righteousness in the day of judgment.

A further observation is that we should never take common grace for granted. We cannot guarantee the continuation of peace and plenty. In many countries there is drought and famine. God who can turn a wilderness into a garden can also turn formerly fruitful places into deserts. These sombre facts all spell urgency. The time is short.

The common grace of God enables us to understand and interpret world history. The Medes, the Persians, the Greeks and the Romans were all proud possessors of vast Empires. These have all passed away but in passing have been used to advance the Empire of Christ which will be eternal (Dan. 2:44). All kingdoms and all Empires have their day and pass away while Christ's kingdom gathers more and more disciples and ultimately will triumph over all others. Often the Empires of this world are used in various ways to promote or assist Christ's kingdom. The Greek culture was so used particularly with its rich language for the writing of the New Testament. God used the Roman Empire to establish law and order and to provide a fairly reliable network of highways and communications which greatly facilitated the spread of the Gospel. It is popular now to discredit the British Empire, and who could dispute some of the evils which prevailed? Nevertheless that era too has been mightily overruled to the opening up of lands for the entrance of Gospel truth. This is true of many countries both large and small which would otherwise have remained in darkness. For instance the fact that Nigeria, the most populous land in Africa today has English as its common language is a tremendous factor to assist the promulgation of the Gospel.

We should observe that the advance of learning and technology, skill in linguistics, ability to translate and print, to use radio, cassettes and video – all these involve common grace. As there is enormous scope to exploit

(continued at foot of page 28)

Some Practical Implications of 'Limited Atonement'

by Dr. Bill Downing

1 Peter 3:18 provides a commentary on the atonement wrought by our Lord Jesus Christ. 'For Christ hath once suffered for sins. . . .' This reveals the fact and necessity of redemption, or why our Lord died. It was for sin. When Peter goes on to say, 'The Just for the unjust . . .' that reveals the vicarious or substitutionary nature of Christ's death. When the apostle declares ' . . . that he might bring us to God' here we note the certainty of redemption. Our Lord did not die to make men savable. The purpose was to reconcile men to God!

With such a profound subject before us I will try to be very clear about three aspects: Limited atonement considered Theologically, Scripturally and Practically.

1. Limited Atonement Considered Theologically

There are three basic theories of the atonement wrought by our Lord: The Universalist, the Arminian and the Calvinist. The Universalist holds that our Lord died for all mankind and therefore all without exception will be saved. The Arminian believes that our Lord died equally for all men but that the atonement remains ineffectual unless human faith is added to it. The Calvinist holds that our Lord died for his elect and those for whom he died will ultimately be saved.

(continued from page 27)

these media for evil so also there is enormous scope to harness them for furthering the Gospel.

Finally we should always be encouraged by the exquisite beauty portrayed in creation teeming as it is with life and vitality (Ps. 104:24, 25). It is as though God could not help himself. How else could he work but in a fashion which is breathtakingly magnificent and beautiful? And when men in their rapacious greed hack God's world to pieces, the Lord in his mercy raises up talented men who campaign to save the rain forests, save the species, and save whole areas from systematic destruction.

Everything that is good in this world of ours can be traced to the Creator of the universe. All good that we see points to Christ, the upholder of it all. He is the only Saviour, for salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12).

Every beautiful thing, every star, every flower, but everything that is good points to him who is the chief of ten thousand, the altogether glorious Saviour. To him all men are invited this day.

See him set forth before your eyes
That precious, bleeding sacrifice!
His offered benefits embrace,
And freely now be saved by grace.

Footnotes

¹ B. B. Warfield. *Biblical and Theological Studies* p. 515 ff. ² For a fuller discussion of this theme see, 'The particular and universal aspects of particular redemption', *Reformation Today* No. 48. ³ Cited by Prof. John Murray. *Collected Writings* vol. 2 p. 98. ⁴ R. B. Kuiper. *For whom did Christ die?* Baker p. 88.

All three schemes claim to be Scriptural and seem to have some Scriptural support. Only one, however, can be fully in accord with the Word of God and consistent with revealed truth. The following questions may well serve to bring into focus the real issue. What was the nature of our Lord's atonement? Did he truly die a substitutionary or vicarious death in the place and stead of sinners? Did he actually 'bear our sins in his own body on the tree' (1 Pet. 2:24)? Was the atonement wrought by our Lord actual or potential? Did he die to save sinners or only make sinners savable? Was the work of our Lord contingent upon human faith or complete in itself? Can sins be borne in general and not in particular?

It may be asked again, is the atonement 'limited'? We must answer an emphatic 'No!' The atonement remains an infinite work and transaction! It can never be limited in its intrinsic value! We must never take one iota from the merits of the suffering and death of our Lord! To put this truth in comparative form: If our Lord Jesus Christ died only to save one human being, how much less would he have had to do than what he did? The answer must be – nothing! He would have had to suffer just as much and die the same death! Now, if our Lord died for the whole of humanity, how much more would he have had to undergo? The answer must be – nothing more than he underwent! As to its value and merits the work of our Lord Jesus Christ was and remains infinite. Yet both Calvinists and Arminians in one way or another 'limit the atonement'. The term must be used with reference to its benefits. The Calvinist believes that the atonement is limited in its purpose and extent; the Arminian holds that it is limited in its power and intent. What are the possibilities? In the light of what we have asked above and in the words of the Puritan John Owen, there are three possibilities: First, that our Lord died for all the sins of all men, whereby all will be saved. This is the reasoning of the Universalist. Second, that our Lord died for some of the sins of all men (or, to state it somewhat differently, he died for all sins in general but none in particular, or yet again, that he died for all sins potentially but not actually, contingently but not completely. There was a difference between what he did and what he accomplished), whereby none will be saved. This is the dilemma of the Arminian, who must remain an inconsistent universalist. Finally, that our Lord died for all the sins of some men (a multitude which no man can number), whereby some will be saved. This is the stand of the Calvinist.

Beyond controversy, we must be faithful to the Word of God, whatever our scheme of theology. We must maintain that when our Lord Jesus Christ suffered and died, he did so as a sacrifice for sin, that his death was truly vicarious or substitutionary, that sin was judged truly and actually on Golgotha in the Person and work of our Lord!

2. Limited Atonement Considered Scripturally

For the sake of brevity I shall categorise the Scriptural teaching on the atonement into three areas. First, there are those passages of Scripture which teach plainly the purpose and intent of our Lord's suffering and death.

Examples include such language as that of our text: He suffered that 'He might bring us to God' (1 Pet. 3:18), 'The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all' (Is. 53:6), 'Who gave himself for our sins that he might deliver us . . .' (Gal. 1:3-4), 'Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us . . .' (Gal. 3:13), 'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners . . .' (1 Tim. 1:15), 'Who gave himself for us that he might redeem us . . .' (Tit. 2:14). Cf. also such passages as 2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 5:8-10; Eph. 2:15-16; Col. 1:21-22; Heb. 9:14. These statements of Scripture beyond controversy show that the suffering and death of our Lord was substitutionary and vicarious. His purpose was to 'bring us to God'.

The second category of Scripture includes those statements which assert a definite and particular redemption. We mark such statements as: He was stricken for the transgression of 'My people' (Is. 53:8, Matt. 1:21). He laid down his life for 'the sheep' (Jn. 10:11). God purchased 'the Church' with his own blood (Acts 20:28). He gave himself in sacrifice for the 'many' (Matt. 20:28, Mk. 14:24, Rom. 5:12-21, Heb. 9:28). Inspired writers use such language as 'Who loved me and gave himself for me' (Gal. 2:20), also such terms as 'we' and 'us' (Rom. 5:8, 8:32, 1 Pet. 3:18). There is abundant reference to the covenantal nature of our Lord's mission and work and the identification of his people with him in these (Cf. Heb. 2:9-18, 9:15). In John 17 he prays 'not for the world', but for those whom God gave him out of the world. Believers have been identified with the Lord Jesus Christ from before the foundation of the world, including his sacrificial death (Eph. 1:3-7). Not only does the Scripture represent the atonement as actually substitutionary and vicarious, but particular, personal, covenantal and effectual!

The third category of passages are those which seem to contradict the reality of substitution and the actuality of the atonement by embracing all mankind, or teaching a universalist scheme. These may be generally arrayed in four different groups. First, statements using the term 'world' in a redemptive context, such as John 1:29, 3:16 and 1 John 2:2. It must be noted that the term 'world' finds several diverse uses in Holy Writ. It may denote the created universe (Jn. 17:5), the general public in a limited sense (Jn. 12:19), mankind as alienated from God and characterised by sin (Jn. 3:19), the world as the realm of evil, the state of flux and sin that characterises human existence (1 Jn. 2:15-17) and, finally, of mankind as composed of both Jew and Gentile (eg., Rom. 11:12). It is in light of this final usage that such statements as John 1:29, 3:16-17, 4:42 and 1 John 2:2 may be properly understood without doing injustice either to the text or to the truth and reality of the atonement's vicarious or substitutionary nature. It is especially relevant when considering the Jewish exclusivism which characterised the religious thinking of our Lord's day. Second, there are those passages which use the term 'all' redemptively. These may be rightly understood by the context, which must govern the use of the pronoun. For instance, 1 Timothy 2:1 in its context is interpreted of all men without distinction and a close study of 2 Corinthians 5:14-17 reveals that the 'all' for whom Christ died, died with him when he died — a contextual and covenantal

‘all’! A third group of various statements may be represented by Hebrews 2:9, in which the words ‘should taste death for every man’ occur. The word ‘man’ is not found in the text, which should read ‘for every one’, the pronoun to be interpreted by the context of verses 9-18. ‘Man’ in the KJV should be italicised. A final group, those passages which seem to teach that our Lord died for those who are evidently unregenerate, may be illustrated by 2 Peter 2:1, wherein it is alleged that our Lord ‘bought’ these false teachers. A close study of the context (v. 1, 12-13) compared with Deuteronomy 32:5-6 reveals — Peter, a Jewish Christian writing to Jewish believers — the Old Testament parallel and the source of his thought. He was taking these false teachers on their own profession of faith, not as actually redeemed. Thus, to be consistent with Scripture we must hold tenaciously to the substitutionary nature of our Lord’s suffering and death — an actual, complete, personal atonement. Only in this way will we be able to remain consistently faithful to the revealed truth of the atonement in every aspect.

3. Limited Atonement Considered Practically

We move on to consider three areas of practical truth. The first of these we pose in the form of a question: What relationship does the extent of the atonement have to the free offer of the Gospel? We reply that a so-called ‘limited atonement’ brings no restriction to bear upon the free offer of the Gospel! None whatsoever! This objection does not stem from Scripture or even Scriptural reasoning, but rather from an unscriptural message. It assumed on the inconsistent universalist scheme that our Lord died for all equally and without exception and therefore part of the Gospel message must be, ‘Christ died for your sins’. But the message that our Lord died for all the sins of all men and that such a death must motivate them to make their religious decision we simply do not find in the Word of God! Never in Scripture is it stated — even in the inspired preaching of the Apostles, which should be our measure and model for preaching — do we discover such a declaration! Such preaching actually cheapens the precious blood of our Lord! It makes his suffering and death of little value!! It puts the centrality of the Gospel, which in reality is the power of God unto salvation, in the realm of mere potential and impotency! Indeed, if carefully thought through, such preaching must restrict the full, free declaration of our Lord’s work for sinners! We find no such restriction or even reservation in the writings of the Puritans or on the part of strong Calvinists such as Whitefield, Brainerd, Edwards, C. H. Spurgeon and a host of others! We rejoice in being able to call men to a real and actual salvation! A true and powerful redemption and deliverance from sin! We preach Christ and him crucified — a full atonement!

A second area of consideration derives from the source and motivation of our Lord’s work on our behalf. In 2 Corinthians 5:14-17 we mark the love of Christ which constrains us! To probe the depths of the atonement is to travel into the depths, yea, the heights of Divine, free and sovereign love! Such is the highest motivation for holy, godly living under the Lordship of Jesus Christ! The reality of the atonement, the actuality of sins forgiven and washed away, the conscious-

ness of a clean soul and the redemptive power of his blood — these realities cannot but shake the soul and life when rightly comprehended!

Finally, in the reality, power and truth of the atonement there derives a confidence and assurance that rests simply in this truth — Jesus died for thee! It is not what I have done or can do. It is not my faith or effort, my works, but the simple, glorious Gospel truth of Jesus' death, his blood, the work of our Lord on my behalf. He died for me! His blood atoned for my sins — not merely in a potential way until my faith laid hold of it, but, indeed, his work guaranteed my faith! The power of the atoning work of the Son of God's love was the basis for regenerating grace! By his blood salvation in its fulness is mine! As my Saviour, he has delivered, does deliver and will ever deliver me through the reality of his atoning work! The truth of this confidence and assurance is most ably and gloriously set forth by Augustus Toplady in his hymn.

*From whence this fear and unbelief?
Hast Thou, O Father, put to grief
Thy spotless Son for me?*

*And will the righteous Judge of men
Condemn me for that debt of sin
Which, Lord, was laid on Thee?*

*Complete atonement Thou hast made,
And to the uttermost farthing paid
Whate'er Thy people owed;*

*How then can wrath on me take place,
If sheltered in Thy righteousness,
And sprinkled with Thy blood?*

*If Thou hast my discharge procured,
And freely in my room endured
The whole of wrath Divine,*

*Payment God cannot twice demand,
First at my bleeding Surety's hand,
And then again at mine.*

*Turn, then, my soul, unto thy rest;
The merits of thy great High Priest
Speak peace and liberty;*

*Trust in His efficacious blood,
Nor fear thy banishment from God,
Since Jesus died for thee!*

This is the great, glorious truth of the true, real, actual covenantal, vicarious suffering and death of our Lord! May God enable us to rest ourselves in a full and complete atonement!

The Forthcoming Carey Conference for ministers
10-12 January, 1984, Swanwick, Derbyshire

Theme: Encouragement in preaching the whole counsel of God

The ministry has turned out to be far more demanding than we thought. Shepherding the flock, preaching the whole counsel of God, warding off savage wolves (Acts 20:25-31) – that is only part of it! The apostle was addressing elders from Ephesus and what we possess is only a synopsis of what he said. What would he say to us today with all our inherited traditions? We certainly have not solved all our problems. How do you handle those who say they do not 'get on' with the ministry, or those who claim they do not 'get anything out of it'? That is not the only kind of discouragement for those who systematically proclaim 'the whole will of God' (Acts 20:27, N.I.V.). It requires a lot of equipment not to say imagination, to press forward in proclaiming all the Divine will when human nature is not partial to it. We have to keep ourselves in a constant state of encouragement. Nothing less than that will do if we are to keep high the morale of those we lead.

One of our number will be addressing the subject of 'Thorns in the ministry', and Don Carson of Trinity Evangelical School, Deerfield, Illinois, how to encourage our people. He says he will illustrate liberally what he has to say from Scripture with references to the revival in French speaking Quebec where his parents laboured faithfully for many years with little fruit. Stuart Olyott, himself pioneering in a barren French speaking part of the world has agreed to address the theme of our mandate to evangelise with unremitting toil at home and abroad.

Peter Anderson is willing to be in the hot seat as questions are fired at him concerning the use of Pop music in Gospel work. A perusal of the recently published E.P. title *Pop goes the Gospel* will help prepare you for this session which promises to be lively.

Our concern is to avoid always reacting to the tune which others play or to spend all our lives wrestling with the problems. Nor do we want to be beset with the question of our own stamina and morale. We do fervently wish to be built up ourselves in all God's counsel. With that in mind the work of challenging our minds and deepening our theological foundations has been given to Don Garlington. David Kingdon will open with a part biography, part review of J. L. Dagg's manual of theology and church order. This reliable, comprehensive and gripping work is now being given first preference in some Bible Colleges. Dagg was a Reformed Baptist who accomplished his task with the handicaps of being virtually blind, mute and lame! Pastor J. K. Davies who has recently moved from Tuckingmill, Cornwall to St. John's Wood, London, has agreed to the task of strengthening and deepening our perspectives on the local church practice under the title 'The life and being of the church', while John Benton will seek to add to this dimension with a paper on worship.

We pray for mutual encouragement as we look forward to our annual Carey Conference.

The forthcoming Carey Conference for ministers
10-12 January, 1984
Swanwick, Derbyshire

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The challenge to produce a N.T. Theology Don Garlington	The Gospel and Rock music Peter Anderson	Sharing	Thorns in the ministry Speaker to be announced
The life and being of a church J. K. Davies	Contours of Worship John Benton	The challenge to encourage God's people in barren times Don Carson (U.S.A.)	Stuart Olyott

For details and bookings write to: John Rubens, 10 Glebe Road, WELWYN, Herts.

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