

REFORM- ATION TODAY'84



EDITORIAL *front inside cover*

- 1 THE GLORY OF THE CHURCH *Editor*
- 7 ESSENTIAL PRACTICAL INGREDIENTS *Editor*
- 12 BILLY GRAHAM, ECUMENISM AND MISSION ENGLAND *Malcolm Watts*
- 21 PARENTHOOD *David Kingdon*
- 25 THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE EARLY CHURCH *Frederika Pronk*
- 29 JUSTIN MARTYR A.D. 100-165 *Gwynne Lloyd Williams*

Editorial

It is a mistake to entertain ideas of the local church which are so idealistic that they lead to discontent and discouragement. The Church is the arena of progressive sanctification. All kinds of sin and failure beset the churches described in the New Testament. For all her weaknesses the Church is still the glorious body of Christ. She is not to be disparaged but built up in the truth and encouraged in holy living. The nature of this subject makes it fitting that we should begin this issue with an affirmation of the Church's glory. Even in her primitive state the LORD was pleased to presence himself with his people with the Shekinah cloud of his glory.

The second exposition follows logically being concerned with practical issues, namely, those ingredients which contribute to the glory of the local church.

The third article can be construed as a defence of the local church. We cannot afford to align our churches with movements which in the worthy name of evangelism, or in the name of a famous personality, subvert the Gospel. We hope our overseas readers will read about Billy Graham and Mission England with sympathy. The issues that are examined are just as important for countries abroad.

Invitation to American readers

America particularly is the home of huge religious organisations. Our American readers know much more about the difficulties presented by Malcolm Watts than we do. He concentrates on the subject of Ecumenism and documents just how far Dr. Graham has compromised with the Roman Catholic system. We welcome correspondence from our American cousins which provides information and advice drawn from their experience. Malcolm Watts does not deal with the other major issue of watering down the Gospel to easy believism and decisionism. In my last editorial (*R.T. 76*) I gave an outline of a book with the title *The Great Invitation*. Part 4 discusses the practice of calling for decisions. While in California and Utah recently I had described to me some of the decisionist methods that are being used. I have suggested the name of Tetzl (see *R.T. 76*) because he claimed such control over the unseen world that he could organise the moment of delivery of a soul from purgatory. There is a similarity with those who use a simple formula for saving souls today. American brothers in particular you are invited to write to me if you have illustrations from real life situations which will help others see the dangers of neglecting repentance, fostering mere assent to Gospel truth, omitting the dynamic of regeneration by the Holy Spirit, and of oversimplifying God's way of salvation.

(continued at foot of page 6)

Front cover — Lancaster is situated to the north of a massive population area of Liverpool, Manchester and Leeds. Lancaster has a population of about 60,000. Centrally placed just by the river Lune which roughly divides the city into two parts is the newly formed Free Grace Church. That title adorns the front facade of their building which they managed to purchase at the truly amazing price of £21,000 (48,000 dollars). There pictured in front of the new building is Michael Jones on the left. His role is that of deacon. In the centre is Brian Ventress who is a policeman. Michael Pearce on the right is a schoolteacher. He and Brian are the elders of the young church which has 17 members. Michael Pearce worked for the Banner of Truth from 1963-65 where he met his wife Glennis. There is an active zeal in the church. Recently the editor was privileged to join with the members in house-to-house visitation. There is much prayer that a suitably equipped pastor may be provided to build up the church. There is a university in Lancaster and the potential for a powerful expository ministry is great.

God's glory is bound up with his churches. Because of the struggles and disappointments, the mundaneness and ordinariness of so much of what goes on in the churches, it is sometimes hard to credit that God's supreme purpose in this world is the gathering and the perfection of his Church (Mt. 16:18). After discussing this subject in general as it relates to the churches today this article outlines some of God's actions as they confirm that his glory is bound up with the development of the Church in the Old Testament era. Attention is then devoted to the theme of the New Testament Church as the Temple of God. The separate exposition with the title Essential practical ingredients for the glory of a Church is designed to provide practical application.

The glory of the Church

Glory stands for that which is of worth. Christ is the person of infinite value or worth. When his presence fills a church it is glorious for he heals souls and drives away all that is of Satan and hell. Is the Holy Spirit filling the churches today? That is something we should consider by way of introduction. After that a glimpse of history and God's actions in that history will highlight the fact that his most spectacular interventions have all had to do with our subject, namely, the glory of the Church. Finally we look at the New Testament Temple and observe some of the practical implications of that temple being filled with the Holy Spirit.

1. The churches today

The general impression given to the world by the churches is a poor one. What we call the institutional churches have the most prominence. These are presented to the public clothed in ceremonies and dead rituals. Sometimes the pomp of the leaders is excessive. The rigmarole and ceremony effectively hides Christ from view. In contrast to the large institutional churches which are usually sacramental in form, there exists a host of smaller struggling non-conformist churches which are often regarded by the world as dull, weak and uninteresting. They are deemed as too insignificant to be worthy of attention. The result is that believers themselves can easily become discouraged by the small impact they make today.

The situation is exacerbated by the fact that we have not enjoyed revival for a very long time. As a consequence many evangelical churches have diminished in size and influence while others have resorted to glossy entertainments copied from the world in order to attract outsiders and bolster their numbers. The spirituality of such causes has suffered as a result. Expository systematic preaching which is searching and powerful is rarely the chief attraction in churches of that kind. Rather it is the programme administered very efficiently and attractively. Many hungry souls long to be fed but go away empty.

When revival comes the glory of the churches is immediately apparent because God himself is present in his glory and power. We hear of revival taking place

during the last few years in Quebec. Exaggeration is always a danger which we must be on our guard against, for God is never glorified by lies. However in this case our information comes from reliable pastors who have worked all their lives among the French-speaking people of this region. We are told that in some places there has been a five-fold increase. After decades of heartbreaking, fruitless toil, that is an enormous encouragement. This is a time of rejoicing when in those areas at least we do not have to persuade the people that the Church is glorious.

Then it was said among the nations, 'the Lord has done great things for them'. The Lord has done great things for us and we are filled with joy (Ps. 126:2, 3).

In the meantime we who labour on without revival and with little encouragement must not give way to harbouring low views of the Church. We must not esteem lightly that which the Lord highly esteems. Has he not loved his Church and shed his blood to redeem her (Acts 20:28, Eph. 5:2)? When the way is hard and dispiriting there is a tendency for fellow servants to fall out with each other and beat one another. Jesus warned against that (Matt. 24:48). We must avoid giving way to a censorious or critical spirit. The Church does not benefit from discontent and negativism but rather from love and constant faithfulness, gentleness, nurture and edification. We are to regard our local church as Christ does. He is the head of the Church, and as such he cares for her, cherishes and sustains her. Our attitude toward the Church should be like his.

When the Hebrew Christians of the apostolic period came out of times of revival into a long hard test of their faith they began to show their departure from the faith by forsaking the assembling of themselves together (Heb. 10:25). How did the author of the Hebrews letter combat such apostasy? He displayed the glory of Christ! Since the true Church is joined to Christ his glory is theirs. We need to see that Christ has made and is making his Church glorious (2 Cor. 3:18). There is a basic glory in every church of believers because Christ is joined to his people. They alone in all the world are the subjects of sanctification. They alone are 'in Christ', indwelt by the Holy Spirit and adopted by the Father. This intrinsic glory is not a private thing to be nurtured by the electronic religion of radio or television. It is a corporate matter. We are to come together as a body and in our coming together we manifest and enjoy the glory of God. It is good to use radio and television for evangelism but those means must never form a substitute for the church.

The same applies to tape recordings and cassettes. Family religion is most important but it too should never be a substitute for the sanctuary when we come and all meet together to worship God. Worship is the highest calling of angels and men (Rev. chs. 4, 5). The Psalms endorse this contention. The Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the private dwellings of Jacob (Ps. 87:2). The psalmist declares 'Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere' (Ps. 84:10).

I have drawn attention to revivals which form God's superlative acts in history. The greatest act of God which we witness in our lives is regeneration or the new birth of souls. A revival is an occasion when that happens on a large scale. We need only to think of the prototype — of Pentecost, to see the truth of that. But there were other times when the Lord came down in power and great glory. He did so when the tabernacle was inaugurated in the wilderness of Sinai. He did so when Solomon dedicated the Temple at Jerusalem. The revelation of the glory of the three persons of the Trinity which will surpass all other revelations of glory is described in the apocalypse (Rev. 21:1ff.). That glory is bound up with the bride of Christ, the New Jerusalem. Her glory will be this: God himself will be in her. In that city will be Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The coming down of the Shekinah glory to fill the tabernacle and Temple and the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the Church at Pentecost were great historic events.

God's actions in history have to do with the glory of the Church. We will now look at these acts in more detail.

2. God's actions in Old Testament history

Sometimes it is our privilege to see a soul being born into God's kingdom by the omnipotent working of the Holy Spirit. That is supernatural work but it is mostly hidden and inward. Powerful external miracles which affect materials in a visible way have belonged to very small periods of history and particularly periods of intense revelation such as the times of Moses, and Christ and his apostles. There have also been other brief eras such as the times of Elijah and Elisha and Daniel, times when the struggle to survive was desperate and God intervened in an extraordinary and supernatural manner.

All God's work in history is designed for our encouragement. We need to meditate upon all providence, past, present and future. Because we have to live by faith and not by sight we can easily fall into the trap of becoming deistical. The deists believed in creation but then thought of the world as a clock which God has wound up and left to run on the basis of what they call natural laws. He has withdrawn into some corner of this seemingly borderless universe and let things go on on their own. That is a grievous error for God is everywhere present in the ordering of this world's affairs. He claims authorship and absolute sovereignty over the ordinary and the extraordinary.

Let me illustrate this matter. There was nothing special about a man called Abram coming out of a city in Mesopotamia called Ur, but Jehovah declares, 'I took your father Abraham from the land beyond the River and led him throughout Canaan and gave him many descendants' (Josh. 24:3). Note the 'I'. 'I took your father Abraham.' It was God's action! He goes on to say, 'I gave him Isaac, and to Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau'. These are the actions of Deity, 'I gave'! He is the architect and builder. He is the God of all providence and of all detail.

Naturally God's extraordinary acts are more dramatic. Think of the deliverance of Israel from the Egyptians at the Red Sea.

Also ranked among the extraordinary acts of God in history are the conquest of Jericho, the consuming of altar and sacrifice at Mount Carmel, the incarnation of Christ and his resurrection from the dead, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. We should also recall such extraordinary events as the plagues of Egypt, the scenes at Mount Sinai, the deliverance of Jerusalem from Sennacherib and the miracles of our Lord and his apostles. These rank among the great interventions of God in history. They all have to do with the Church, either in her establishment or the preservation of her glory.

The giving of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost to fill the church body of Christ reminds us of that which long before typified that extraordinary historical event, namely, the filling of the tabernacle and the Temple by God in what we call the shekinah glory. (Shekinah is a Hebrew word meaning inhabitation or indwelling.) Let us go back to that time.

Then the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. Moses could not enter the Tent of Meeting because the cloud had settled upon it, and *the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle*. In all the travels of the Israelites, whenever the cloud lifted from above the tabernacle, they would set out, but if the cloud did not lift, they did not set out — until the day it lifted. So the cloud of the Lord was over the tabernacle by day, and fire was in the cloud by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel during all their travels (Ex. 40:34-38).

That glory was eventually sinned away and when the ark of God was captured by the Philistines, the wife of the priest Phinehas called her son *Ichabod*, which means the glory has departed. She said, 'the glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God has been captured' (1 Sam. 4:22). However through the patient teaching ministry of Samuel Israel was again built up in spiritual stature. When Solomon had built the majestic temple in Jerusalem he gathered all the people and dedicated it to God. At the conclusion of his dedicatory prayer the glory of the Lord filled the sanctuary.

When Solomon finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and *the glory of the Lord filled the temple*. The priests could not enter the temple of the Lord because *the glory of the Lord filled it*. When all the Israelites saw the fire coming down and the glory of the Lord above the temple, they knelt on the pavement with their faces to the ground, and they worshipped and gave thanks to the Lord, saying,

'He is good;
his love endures for ever' (2 Chron. 7:1-3).

We have observed that God upholds, directs and governs the world in all ordinary affairs and that occasionally he intervenes in an extraordinary manner. Furthermore we have seen that these actions have all to do with the preserva-

tion, wellbeing and glory of his Church and that the glory of God was especially bound up with God's people in the tabernacle and the temple which on occasions were filled with God's glory. This leads us to consider the Church today.

3. The New Testament Temple and what her glory means for us

The New Testament abounds in references to the temple. The Church of Christ is that temple. 'You are God's building,' says Paul (1 Cor. 3:9). 'Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple' (1 Cor 3:16, 17). Again, 'do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit' (1 Cor. 6:19).

Peter says that we are like living stones being built into a spiritual house (1 Pet. 2:5) and Paul uses the same analogy to stress the unity of the Church of Christ. We are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Jesus Christ himself as the chief cornerstone. Observe the likeness to the temple:

In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit (Eph. 2:21, 22).

The glory of the Lord finds its supreme manifestation in the Church. Here, and here alone, are all his attributes displayed. His eternal power is seen in the creation of the universe but his grace, love and wisdom is seen in Christ and the union of Christ with his bride, the Church.

Are we endued with a sense of this glory and the privileges which are ours? How can we express our gratitude in a practical way? Our Lord commanded that we should love one another. The Temple is built up through the love that the members bear for one another (Eph. 4:16). The passage in Ephesians 2 says we are 'fitly framed together' (K.J.V.), 'The whole building is joined together' and 'we are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.'

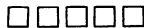
For people from so many backgrounds and cultures who conflict with each other in political outlook, in temperament and personality to be joined together in unity and harmony is a feat which only the Holy Spirit can accomplish. Black and white, Arab and Jew, rich man — poor man, Democrat and Republican, Conservative party and Labour party — what a mixture! But we are all brought together to be one in Christ. Now there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave or free, male or female, we are all one (Gal. 3:26-29).

The unity set before us is by no means easy to attain in practice. Think of all the aggravations and misunderstandings that arise and which Satan exploits to divide us from each other. Little wonder that Paul urges us to be completely humble and gentle and to be patient and to bear with one another in love. We

are exhorted to strive fervently to keep the unity of the Spirit (Eph. 4:1-3). The Greek word in verse 3 — endeavouring — *dazontes* is a strong term meaning to be eager or to make every strenuous effort. This strenuous effort will call for every kind of gentleness, humility and forbearance. We can be humble with some matters but sometimes not with others. For instance we may be humble if someone criticises us personally but if criticism is made of our family or our favourite minister or evangelist (just and lawful criticism), then we cannot stand it. We too easily allow ourselves to be provoked into aggressive and warlike attitudes.

This teaching of the glory of the Church is very practical. The consummation of all things is when the God of glory, Father, Son and Holy Spirit take up residence in the New Jerusalem, that is the Church, the bride of Christ. Then all quarrels will have ceased and all resentments and grievances ended. Brothers and sisters, as we see the glory of Christ in his Church, now during her preparation, and as she will be in her consummate beauty and perfection, let us make every possible effort to maintain peace, love and unity. Our glory is unique in the world. Let it not be tarnished with petty quarrels or differences and blemished with unforgiving attitudes that refuse to forget. Love hides a multitude of sins. Let us determine to possess the wisdom of heaven which is pure, peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Where there are divisions let us be the peacemakers who sow in peace and raise a harvest of righteousness (Jas. 3:17, 18). Above all let us be sure that our tongues are under control because the tongue is the gauge of life. When we control that organ which is capable of setting lives on fire then we indeed have true control (Jas. 3).

We are the children of glory who constitute a local church which reflects the glory of the New Jerusalem. Let us behave in every way which is consistent with that glory.



EDITORIAL

(continued from inside front cover)

2nd and 3rd degree separation

There was a warm response to the article in *R.T.* 75 with the above title. We are concerned to strengthen and encourage ministers who come under great pressure from their deacons or members to compromise with Ecumenism. If such men can usefully employ copies of this magazine with Malcolm Watts' article we would be pleased to negotiate with regard to a discount price.

Promotion work

It is always difficult to persuade friends to read and study and we are thankful for supporters who exercise a gift in this way. With regard to agency work we record our very warm gratitude to Bill Carey for his work since 1970. He is retiring as an American agent on account of his being in close proximity to and purpose with Puritan Reformed (see back cover for details).

Following the teaching of the previous exposition we go on to consider those factors which contribute to the glory of a local church. This treatment is by no means exhaustive but concentrates on five foremost issues.

Essential practical ingredients for the glory of a church

The first factor which contributes to the glory of a local church is that it is,

1. A place of inspired proclamation

The sacred oracles provide our only source of guidance and authority in this world. There is nowhere else that we can turn. The Scriptures should be declared to us in such a way that our hearts are warmed, our minds instructed and our wills motivated. That is no easy task. It certainly requires the power of the Holy Spirit. Through preaching, our spiritual, experimental and practical knowledge of the Bible should be increasing all the time. The Bible is not a mere text book. It is our only source of power. Bible truth grips our souls and transforms us to be like Christ.

The way in which we are transformed is through the mind (Rom. 12:1, 2). The whole person is gradually changed in this manner. While we believe in the primacy of the mind we stress the utmost importance of going through the mind to the affections. For instance it is crucial that we know about Christ in his person and work. Such truth is not presented as cold fact, but as living and glorious truth to be deeply thankful for — truth which profoundly moves the soul and stirs the emotions and feelings. We are moved in our affections by the dying love of our dear Redeemer, but cannot be so moved unless the vivid facts of the matter are presented clearly and impressively to us (Gal. 3:1).

If a hearer rebels against preaching and insists that he can do without it and rely on musical items, or entertainment type services, to inspire him, this will inevitably lead to the dethronement of the Word of God as the rule of life. If a person chooses only to observe the subjects which make him 'feel' good, he will end with an attitude of resisting anything which offends his feelings. His feelings will end up boss in his soul, imperiously demanding soft things and pleasant, and rebelling against everything to do with effort, mortification, correction and discipline. There is an analogy here with childhood. A child left to its own appetites soon becomes a spoiled brat. There are those who allow themselves to be governed by their feelings and thereby become spiritual brats.

One of Satan's main objectives is to dethrone the Word. The best strategy is to disaffect believers toward preaching. To this end what better than to suggest that enough preaching has been heard and now you know it all? After all you

can read all you need in the great variety of theological books available today. And if you need a refresher course you can simply choose a cassette from the many that are advertised.

Neither books, cassettes nor private devotion can ever replace proclamation of God's Word within his living church. It is in that context alone that the unique power, wisdom and genius of the Word is experienced because God Triune himself is present and at work.

Preaching is addressed to a living body of people. Take away that context and you have the trunk but not the tree. The reality of a living assembly (church) of people brings us to the next factor.

2. *A sanctuary of lively worship*

The connection between the proclamation of authority from God's Word and worship in the sanctuary is beautifully expressed by Prof. J. Murray. Says he,

It is imperative that worship be given priority. When any other function is accorded priority, then the God-centred interest is displaced by the man-centred. Man's chief end is to glorify God. This governs all of life and it is exemplified in the church by the fact that worship is its principal function. The worship now in view is *specific*, and thus distinguished from the generic devotion that should characterise a believer in all his undertakings and commitments. It is also *corporate* and therefore distinct from the acts of specific worship in which individuals engage as individuals. And it is *prescribed* worship, the offering up of spiritual sacrifices and therefore indited and directed by the Holy Spirit. This regulative principle needs to be underlined. 'The acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by himself, and so limited by his own revealed will, that he may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representation, or any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scripture' (*Westminster Conf. of Faith*, XXI, i).

There are two aspects to worship, God's address to us and our response to this address. The former consists particularly in the reading and preaching of the Word, and the latter in adoration, reception, thanksgiving, and prayer.

Our constant quest should be for genuine spiritual vitality within the boundaries outlined above. We should seek spiritual liveliness within the elements of the reading, the preaching, singing and praying.

Some have sought to increase vitality through experimenting with participation by getting more of those present to contribute audibly. This can be shallow because it is rare for the standard to be high when preparation is minimal. In hearing, singing and praying all participate. The essence of worship is its verticality and objectivity, we do not worship each other (see article *R.T.* 70).

Some seek to enliven their worship by dancing but there is no precedent for that in the New Testament. References to instances of dancing in the Old Testament

are inadequate and unconvincing as a means to provide a warrant for standard New Testament practice.

An experienced Christian recently visited an Anglican church where there was an orchestra and dancing in the service. The church was packed whereas the Reformed church he attends has only about 35. In that Anglican church everything was very 'matey' and exceedingly informal — the congregation chatting as they queued for communion. Large numbers are frequently quoted to vindicate such forms of worship. Yet this brother testifies that he witnessed six men he knew well from his place of daily work go forward to communion. Not one of these men had the remotest idea of the meaning of evangelical Christianity. Not one of them maintained a Christian witness at work. Moreover the ten minute homily that formed part of that worship service was hardly likely to challenge their ignorance or awaken them out of their complacency.

It is all very well being critical of places where there are crowds of people but how do we bridge the gulf between the established Christians and the secular world outside? Too often our services are so entirely adapted to the needs of the strong that there is little or nothing for the outsiders or newcomers, and very little for the weaker ones to take hold of. Too easily our form of worship is far too formidable for people who know nothing about disciplined listening or very little about concentrating on a reasoned discourse. Yet strangely if there is evident genuine enjoyment of all the constituent parts of our public worship these problems are overcome. Occasionally someone from the secular irreligious world comes under conviction of sin and then we all see again that when the Holy Spirit works these problems of form evaporate. When people are awakened spiritually to be hungry for the Word we then hear no more complaints about long sermons.

Preparation prior to all our services of worship remains the principal means of ensuring vitality in those services. When we come with hearts devoted, expectant and eager to render praise and thanksgiving, having prayed for our leaders, and especially our preacher, we may then with justification expect God's blessing. We should always greatly fear to miss a worship service in case that is the very time when our omnipotent gracious God visits us to answer our prayers in calling sinners and reviving saints. Let us not miss the very occasion when he comes to reward his patient and persevering people.

3. A house of fervent prayer

A healthy church is a praying church. The prayer meeting can often tell a visitor more about the state of a church than the Sunday services can. At the prayer meeting you discover the faithful supporters. Silences in the prayer time are often unfairly interpreted as signs of deadness. In some parts it would be accurate to say that the reason is not spiritual at all but physical. Add three hours of travel to a hard eight hours of intense work and you have a good reason why some are not brimming with vitality at the midweek prayer meeting.

A digression at this point may interest my readers. During the last three years the world has suffered a serious recession. In Britain this has resulted in over three million unemployed. It has also resulted in those who are employed working much harder and longer than they have ever done before. Increased competitiveness has meant that firms have cut back on staff to save money. Those who are left with jobs have much more to do. They cannot complain lest they be the next to go! In schools and hospitals many of the best staff have simply become overburdened and their goodwill is exploited. Pastoral problems are doubled what with the exhausted overworked on the one hand and the frustrated, angry disillusioned unemployed on the other – too much work for some, and nothing for others.

So we return to the mid-week prayer meeting. Practical measures ought to be applied to enliven our prayer meetings. It is not irreverent to make these occasions as interesting as possible. News, burden-sharing, singing, prayers (calling on those who pray well but are inhibited) can be arranged with an order which varies. Sometimes it is helpful to begin with items of interest and news (brief – not long winded!), followed by prayer, followed by a short summary of the sermon the previous Sunday, followed by discussion. The needs differ in every church. Obviously gimmickry needs to be avoided. Also it is important to allow adequate time for intercession, but not long dull prayers.

The prayer meetings are very important. No one preacher, however widely he travels, can speak for all the churches. While acknowledging that, I would suggest that most of our churches are sustained spiritually by inner cores of truly faithful praying believers. Let such take courage and not allow themselves to be discouraged by the fact that God's purposes are mostly accomplished by faithful minorities.

4. *A haven of warm fellowship*

The church is a family of those who love one another fervently (1 Pet. 4:8). The individual members show the genuineness of their love by the practical care they show toward each other. Sometimes when members complain and say that there is no love in the church, what they mean is that they themselves feel the need of more attention and are finding integration difficult. Most evangelical churches show a great deal of love in all kinds of practical ways. Yet in spite of that there are always some who are not content or who find it difficult to forget their grievances. 1 Corinthians 13 is the Bible's song of love, a song which the members should not only sing with their tongues but practise with their lives:

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres (1 Cor. 13:4-7).

A church as it should be is a church in which the members are learning what spiritual love is because the church is being prepared for that world in which love reigns.

It is not enough that all the members learn to keep Christ's new commandment to love one another. A love of compassion must extend to those outside which leads us to consider evangelism.

5. A concern to promote the Gospel

The Lord Jesus Christ was sent into this world with a twofold mission. His first objective was to redeem his Church by laying down his life as a ransom for many (Mk. 10:45). His second objective was to insure that the knowledge of his redemption would spread effectively right through the world. He himself provided an example of what it is to love people and take the Gospel to them. He was thorough and systematic in evangelising Israel (Lk. 11:1-17). By training the twelve and making provision for the establishment of a worldwide Church, well equipped with the Scriptures, he ensured that the Gospel would be propagated to the end of time. Indeed he promised that he would be with his people always as they obeyed that command (Mt. 28:18-20). The responsibility is one which rests on God's people together as a body.

The glory of Christ therefore is seen in a church which is actively promulgating the Gospel. Every member is included because in some way or another every member is in contact with some part of the unbelieving world. Every member of the church conveys a message of life to those outside by the way he lives, works, speaks and by the way he responds to different situations. Each individual member operates in a sphere in which his witness is unique. Nobody else can do it for him. All believers are to have a concern for people as people. All are to show the compassion of Christ. Each one from time to time brings peace where there is disharmony, conveys wisdom where there is foolishness, seriousness where there is levity, humility where pride vaunts itself, joy and hope where there is despair, and the good news wherever there are ears willing to hear it.

The glory of God is seen in a body of believers where all the above named qualities are in evidence. We see God's glory when those who profess his name are truly exercised and concerned about the lost world around them and when they are fervent in prayer for that world. How can a body of people say they believe in eternal heaven and hell and then not be concerned about evangelism and not be practical in supporting and assisting missionary endeavour?

The glory of Christ is seen in a body of people who reflect his love and concern for a lost world.



During the last 25 years several major attempts have been made in Britain to promote nationwide, cooperative and ecumenical evangelism. In 1973 there was SPREE and in 1975 NIE (Nationwide Initiative in Evangelism). NIE claimed to have more support than any cooperative effort in British history. This support included the Roman Catholic Church. NIE led to what is called The Decade for Evangelism beginning in 1980, which in turn has led to Mission England in which Billy Graham has agreed to conduct five regional missions in this year of 1984. The programme, which leads to the Billy Graham Missions in 1984, includes: Training Courses for church leaders entitled 'Is my church worth joining?' and 'Caring for new Christians'; Retreats with emphasis on the need for 'effective ministry' and 'personal renewal'; Prayer and Praise Nights for 'celebration' and 'worship'; Triplet Prayer Groups in which three professing Christians meet together, each to pray for three friends or relatives; Nurture Groups, which are in process of being set up, and which are designed at providing care for 'enquirers' and 'professing converts'.

Future plans include Christian Life and Witness Classes, a five-session training programme (Feb. 1984), designed to provide counsellors for the stadium meetings; and a major Conference, to be held at Brean Sands holiday camp to 'encourage and sustain revival' (Oct. 1984).

Billy Graham, Ecumenism and Mission England

by Malcolm Watts, Pastor of Emmanuel Church, Salisbury

At the outset I wish to affirm with all my heart the necessity of evangelism. Reaching souls with the Gospel is so supremely important that Scripture stresses it as the Church's great duty. All Christian believers should accept it as a call from God and intensify their efforts to evangelise the nations.

Our Lord and Saviour's last command summons us to continuous and persistent action until people everywhere hear of that salvation which God has provided in his Son for all who repent and believe the Gospel. By the grace of God we are therefore committed to the work of evangelism.

Mission England, however, is a campaign of evangelism in which we cannot co-operate. Conscience does not allow us to do so because clear scriptural injunctions as to the methods of evangelism are being bypassed, and we can devote ourselves only to true New Testament evangelism, which means 'God's work done in God's way'.

A Basis of Truth Essential

If there is to be any co-operation in evangelism, that evangelism at every point must be based on biblical truth. There, and there alone, can be found the platform upon which fellowship and testimony can be built. It is therefore essential to have a precise declaration of fundamental doctrines accepted by all participating parties. Mission England does not have such a doctrinal statement and no formal assent to the fundamental truths of the Faith is required of those wishing to be involved. 'We have not adopted a basis of faith,' says Brian Mills, the Assistant National Director.

The Evangelical Alliance, from which the original initiative emerged, does have a Basis of Faith, but in the development of Mission England there has been no insistence on commitment to it and the result has been an increasing tendency to seek a co-operation destitute of theological agreement.

Eddie Gibbs, the National Training Director, tells me that 'Mission England

is an evangelical initiative with all those of us on the Federal Board able to sign the Lausanne Covenant'. This Lausanne Covenant is a document expressing a consensus of the mind of the International Congress on World Evangelisation, held in Lausanne, Switzerland, in 1974, and attended by approximately 4,000 professing Christians, representing 151 countries. In some ways it is a helpful document, including in it a number of important evangelical doctrines; but it is not a very satisfactory basis because of its rather alarming omissions, including a complete lack of testimony to justification by faith alone.

There is no reference in it to the fact of the Fall (merely the statement that 'men are perishing because of sin'). It has nothing to say about a personal devil (it speaks of 'principalities and powers of evil'). It does not mention the Virgin Birth (our Lord is simply described as 'the only God-man'). It is completely silent on the matter of Christ's sinless humanity. It does not clearly affirm substitutionary atonement ('He gave himself as the ransom for sinners' can be understood in a non-substitutionary sense: 'it cost the life of Jesus Christ to bring us home to God'. William Barclay). It fails to assert justification by faith alone (that doctrine is neither properly defined nor sufficiently stressed. All the Covenant affirms is the need for 'the wholehearted personal commitment of repentance and faith'. Romanists will find that acceptable. The Council of Trent speaks of being 'justified by faith' but 'on this account, that faith is the beginning of human salvation, the foundation and root of all justification'. Sess. VI. On Justification, ch. 8. What therefore ought to be asserted is the biblical and Protestant doctrine which, according to Rome's Tridentine Statement, she not only denies but utterly repudiates; namely, that 'justifying faith is nothing but confidence in the divine mercy remitting sin on account of Christ' and that 'this faith *alone* is that by which we are justified'. Ch. 10. It is at this vital point

that the Lausanne Covenant is inexcusably vague. In 1531 Luther said: 'I see that the devil is continually attacking this fundamental doctrine. . . . Well, then, I, Doctor Martin Luther, unworthy herald of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, confess this article, that faith *alone* justifies before God; and I declare that it will stand and remain for ever.') And it nowhere avers the everlasting punishment of the wicked ('eternal separation from God' fails to safeguard biblical truth and to exclude the error of Conditional Immortality). Clearly, the Lausanne statement is quite inadequate, but whether this be so or not is quite beside the point because, after stating that the members of the Federal Board are able to sign this Covenant, Mr. Gibbs goes on to say: 'In fact we have not required the signing of the document as we trust one another as brothers in the Lord'. But surely this is to be naive. If there is no insistence on a formal and signed declaration of belief, there can be no reasonable guarantee of orthodoxy even on the Federal Board.

It is claimed that thousands of Christians in their local churches are already involved in Mission England, but what steps have been taken to ensure that these are faithful to the essentials of the Faith? No subscription to a doctrinal standard is required from any of them. Whoever wants to join in appears to be welcome. Mr. Mills writes: 'Mission England is an evangelical initiative which is offered to all who may wish to associate with it.' As far as I can ascertain, there are just two safeguards and these are mentioned by Mr. Gibbs: (i) 'Anybody from a Trinitarian church professing Jesus Christ as Lord is welcome to participate.' This is desperately inadequate. It ignores distinctive evangelical truth and leaves the door wide open to all except the Unitarians! It is similar to the formula of agreement for the World Council of Churches: 'The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the Scriptures, and therefore seek to fulfil

together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.' (ii) 'Any who can identify with the evangelistic message preached by Dr. Graham and are in sympathy with the objectives are welcome to participate.' But Dr. Graham's 'evangelistic message' does not spell out in any detail, or with any preciseness, the vital doctrines of the historic Christian Faith. Consequently some past and present churchmen and theologians with heterodox views have felt quite able to 'identify' with his preaching: Dr. A. M. Ramsey, Dr. Leslie Weatherhead, Bishop James Pike, Cardinal Cushing, Norman Vincent Peale, Bishop Hugh Montefiore and Pope John Paul II, and this is to name but a few. Obviously this is no touchstone whereby the Faith of churches or individuals can be judged. As for 'sympathy with objectives', Gavin Reid says that 'Mission England has as a basic aim making a quality improvement in the continuing evangelism of our churches'. The generality will probably think that a good idea. Once again, there is nothing here to ensure the evangelical character of Mission England.

The Scriptures tell us that soundness of doctrine is important (1 Tim. 1:10; 2 Tim. 2:2; Titus 1:9; 2:1, 2). Co-operation can only take place within the framework of sound doctrine, clearly defined (Amos 3:3; Acts 2:42; 1 Jn. 1:3; 2 Jn. 1). Bible-believing Christians are not at liberty to unite in evangelistic ventures with those who deny or oppose important Christian doctrines. The Word of God forbids it (Rom. 16:17; 2 Cor. 6:14-18; 2 Thess. 3:14; 1 Tim. 6:5; 2 Tim. 2:20, 21; Titus 3:10; 2 Jn. 10).

Ecumenism

Mission England is a venture in ecumenical evangelism. Its advertising literature extends the broadest of invitations: 'Mission England does include you! If you wish your church to become involved in this exciting project, please drop a line to . . .' (Leadership No. 3).

Evidently Mission England's approach is inclusivist and anti-separationist. The object is to bring all together in one grand evangelistic effort. A 'mixed multitude', therefore, ecclesiastically and theologically, will be involved in support. What is this if not ecumenical?

The organisers deny it, but their denials are somewhat qualified. Clive Calver underlines the fact that 'Mission England was conceived as a totally evangelical initiative'. This, in itself, suggests that it was evangelical only in the origination. He goes on, however, to say: 'It was not seen *primarily* as an ecumenical activity in any sense at all' (*italics mine*). That speaks for itself. 'The project,' according to Eddie Gibbs, 'is not "ecumenical" in the sense of being a consortium of church hierarchies.' In this very narrow and restricted sense, this is no doubt true; but clearly it is ecumenical, as that word is generally understood, because in it professed Christians of all religious shades will be working together.

Evidence for this is not wanting, I will give just two examples. The new Archbishop of York, John Habgood, addressed a meeting last October at Durham 'under the Mission England banner'. In January, Bishop John Baker is to give the 'Call to Mission' and head a question-and-answer session for Mission England Salisbury Area. Now neither of these men, so far as I am aware, would describe himself as evangelical, but here they are, actively engaged in the work of Mission England. Is this not evangelism of a very ecumenical brand?

The *Church of England Newspaper* of April 15th, 1983, carried an article written by John Williamson, Regional Co-ordinator for Mission England in the North West, entitled 'Mission England . . . why now?' In it he revealed the ecumenical nature of Mission England. He wrote: 'We have seen the recent failure of efforts to bring major denominations into structural unity.

The world usually sees the church divided and arguing with itself, but could not evangelism give us a unique opportunity to present positively and powerfully One Lord and One Faith? He went on to say: 'Mission England is not and must not be limited to support from evangelical churches.' His article concluded with an impassioned plea to the general readership: 'I would like to urge ministers to participate — ministers hold the key, and without the evident support of the minister, individuals are unlikely to make much impact — and I urge them, regardless of denomination or tradition or churchmanship. . . . May I commend Mission England to all who read this — come and help us.'

It is undoubtedly ecumenical and, what is more, it is likely to condition some evangelicals for the acceptance of the ecumenical movement. In a Newsletter sent out by the North-East Committee of Mission England, the Assistant Bishop of Newcastle, the Rt. Rev. Kenneth Gill, Chairman of Mission England North-East, referred to tensions arising over doctrinal differences but, he added, 'one spin off is a deepening Christian unity'.

We believe that ecumenism, involving as it does the recognition of unbiblical and non-evangelical churches, is nothing more than a denial of the New Testament Gospel and the betrayal of the Protestant Reformation. What is needed today is not concession and compromise for the sake of superficial unity, but the exposure of false doctrine and the fearless declaration of 'the whole counsel of God' (Matt. 23; Mk. 7:9; Acts 20:27; Gal. 1:9; 2 Tim. 4:1-5; Jude 3).

Liberals and Roman Catholics

In the bulletin *Leadership*, for June 1983, appears a photograph of Hugh Montefiore, Bishop of Birmingham, and underneath, a quotation from his Diocesan news-sheet: 'I think we all need a bit of a jolt if we are to have a new spirit in this secular land of ours . . . I

would like to commend Mission England to the parishes of Birmingham diocese, and I hope that everyone will take the opportunity which it presents to deepen their faith and to share it with others.' The Bishop is also quoted as promising to give his personal backing to Billy Graham. 'I will support him,' he says.

Over the years Bishop Montefiore has achieved notoriety on account of his heretical public statements, perhaps the very worst being in 1967 when, in an address to the Modern Churchman's Conference in Oxford, he made a blasphemous and highly offensive suggestion concerning our Lord Jesus Christ. More recently (Feb. 1983), addressing clergy in Stepney, he expressed his view that salvation could be found outside Christianity. His remarks stirred a controversy. He later defended what he had said and spoke further on the subject. 'The hidden Christ,' he said, 'may be known by those who cannot name him.' He then asserted that Jews could be saved without actually becoming Christians. To avoid all possibility of misunderstanding or misrepresentation, I will quote a part of the Bishop's comment: 'I do not believe that salvation is denied to my dear father' who truly loved God. (Do you believe that?) I will always remember talking to a Jewish student society and their amazement and interest when I told them they were not consigned to Hell, as their zealous Christian fellow students had informed them.'

It is profoundly disturbing to know that a churchman with such views is participating in Mission England, but it is even more disturbing to see that he and his comments are being used for advertising and promotional purposes. It is a grave error to admit the testimony and support of such men. Christ will suffer no patronage from those who deny the truth (Mk. 1:24, 25; 3:11, 12; Acts 16:16-18).

On the matter of Roman Catholic participation, Brian Mills writes: 'There are no attempts made to involve the Roman Catholic Church as such with Mission England in the evangelising of the nation. However, *if individual Roman Catholics wish to participate in prayer and in training*, and if Roman Catholic churches want to encourage their members to attend Mission England events, including the Billy Graham meetings, *they are at liberty to do so*' (italics mine). According to a report by The British Council of Protestant Christian Churches, Bishop David Sheppard of Liverpool has already attended preparatory meetings for Mission England in the company of the Roman Catholic Archbishop.

Again, this is alarming. The dispute between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism is not about trifles. The Gospel itself is at stake. There are two entirely different answers to the question, 'What must I do to be saved?' — Rome's and the Bible's. It is as ridiculous as it is dangerous to contemplate evangelising with Roman Catholics and the Roman Catholic Church.

Let us not be deceived by the friendly gestures and addresses of the present Pope. The man is a convinced traditionalist and he is determined to maintain all the errors and superstitions of the corrupt Roman system.

As soon as he took office he proclaimed Papal Supremacy in no uncertain terms. 'Today,' he said, 'the new Bishop of Rome solemnly begins his ministry and the mission of Peter . . . Rome is the See of Peter. . . . And how could one not tremble before the universal mission of his See of Rome?' Since that time he has not only persistently made such claims but he has even elevated this false dogma to a position alongside the Gospel itself. Addressing the South American bishops on Christian Unity, he said: 'It is unity around the Gospel, the body and blood of the Lord, and

Peter living in his successors, all of which are different signs, but highly important signs of the presence of Jesus among us.'

He has given personal and powerful impetus to the cult of Mary, making pilgrimages in her honour and repeatedly paying to her idolatrous veneration and worship. In a Papal encyclical he described her as 'the Spouse of the Holy Spirit and Mother of the Church'. 'By entrusting yourself to Mary,' he has said, 'you receive Christ.' He is doing all he can to encourage Mariolatry or creature-worship, and the result is neither more nor less than 'baptised' paganism.

He has also set his seal to the false Romish doctrine of the sacraments. Speaking in Westminster Cathedral, he asserted that 'in baptism we are drawn into the community of faith. We become part of the pilgrim people of God.' And in his encyclical on 'The Holy Eucharist' he reasserted the dogma of Transubstantiation, insisting that the bread and wine 'become truly, really and substantially Christ's own body that is given up and his blood that is shed'.

This is Romanism; surely the worst of all apostasies. To associate with it in evangelism is to sacrifice every biblical principle and to incur the guilt of blatant disobedience to the Word of God.

Entertainment

There has been a marked tendency in recent years to combine both evangelism and worship with entertainment. Musicals and dramatic presentations have become acceptable to many in the modern church and they are being introduced increasingly as important parts of the church's programme.

Certainly this seems to be the case with Mission England.

Last spring, as an introduction to the venture, 'Prepare the Way' was staged in approximately forty major cities. It was

advertised as 'a combination of worship and prayer, drama designed to illustrate the possibilities of personal, conversational evangelism, together with the clear preaching of the word'. There was a follow-up to this in the autumn, at least in some places, called 'Here is your God!'

'Something to Celebrate' was part of a four-day project held early last year in Norfolk and led by Gavin Reid, Mission England's National Director. According to the report given, Gavin Reid 'headed-up an all-Norfolk team of talented musicians and actors. And a dance-drama group from a local school took part in the final meeting at Norwich Cathedral.'

Bristol also had a week of 'evangelistic preaching, drama and music', followed by a 'music festival'. On the Isle of Wight there was a presentation of 'Toy-maker & Son', 'the gospel story . . . outlined in colour and movement'. Elsewhere 'the professional dramatists "Straight-forward"' have appeared, along with nationally known musicians.

Now this may be typical modern evangelism and typical modern worship, but we are bound to ask: Is it biblical? With Scripture in our hands we can only answer, 'Emphatically not!'.

Scripture alone must govern the church. Christians are not at liberty to introduce into matters of worship and evangelism anything for which they cannot produce express warrant in the Word of God (Deut. 12:32; Prov. 30:6). 'It is not a property of the church,' as Calvin once wrote, 'to disregard the limits of the Word of God.'

Some, of course, would claim that they have scriptural authority for these things. They would appeal to the worship of the ancient Jewish church, with its musical instruments and its meaningful ritual. The argument will not hold. The ceremonial worship of the Old Testament, designed to symbolise and teach certain spiritual truths,

has been fulfilled and abolished in Christ; and it therefore provides no model for the Christian church today (Acts 15:10; Col. 2:16, 17; Heb. 8:13; 9:10). New Testament revelation, in which the symbolic and material has given place to the spiritual (Jn. 4:23, 24), is the God-given rule for New Testament church practice (Matt. 28:19, 20; 1 Cor. 11:1, 2; 14:37). Musical celebrations and theatrical productions are nowhere authorised by God in the New Testament and they ought not to be used in the church's service. 'There is no middle ground,' says Professor Girardeau, 'between submission to God's revealed will and a worship dictated by the fancies of sinners.'

Billy Graham

Dr. Graham, who has preached in person to well over eighty million people, has been undoubtedly used of God to bring thousands of them to Christ. This naturally makes us reluctant to express disquiet and criticism, but a man's success should never blind us to his mistaken policies, neither should it silence us when protest and reproof are needed. The apostle Peter was incredibly blessed by the Lord in the days of the early church, but when, through compromise, he ran counter to the truth of the Gospel and thereby threatened the cause of our Lord Jesus Christ, Paul 'withstood (opposed) him to the face, because he was to be blamed' (Gal. 2:11; cf. Lev. 19:17; 1 Tim. 5:19, 20; 2 Tim. 4:2, 3).

The fact is that over the years Dr. Graham has changed his position.

In 1951 he said: 'We do not condone nor have fellowship with any form of modernism' (reported in *The Northwestern Pilot*). The following year, in a letter to Dr. Bob Jones, Senior, he was able to say: 'The modernists do not support us anywhere.' This is not the case now. Dr. Graham's present position is stated by him in an open letter. 'I do not believe,' he says, 'that the ground of our fellowship is to be the inerrancy of Scripture but, rather, the

ground of our fellowship is to be the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ. . . . While holding a firm theological position, yet in the proclamation of the gospel there is flexibility of fellowship.' Now it is our unyielding conviction that the basis for fellowship must be an explicit commitment to the Bible as the inspired and inerrant Word of God. It is this alone which ensures the integrity of united witness to our God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Clearly Dr. Graham is willing to associate with non-evangelicals (Modernists and Romanists) in his evangelism. In an interview with the editors of *Christianity Today* in July 1981, he confirmed that this was so. He said: 'I have no problems working with anyone, under any label, as long as he knows the Lord Jesus Christ as his Saviour and is living the life of a Christian disciple.' This may sound fine but it actually allows those who deny vital biblical doctrines to co-operate with him in evangelism.

This is exactly what has happened. He has allowed himself to be sponsored by, and he has willingly worked with such convinced and unrepentant Modernists as Dr. G. F. Fisher, Bishop Mervyn Stockwood, Dr. John Sutherland Bonnell, Bishop James Pike, Henry van Dusen, Bishop Gerald Kennedy, Dr. Robert Schuller, and a host of others.

His increasing involvement with Roman Catholicism must also be a major concern to evangelical Protestants. In October 1979 he appeared on the Phil Donahue Show and said: 'I think the American people are looking for a leader, a moral and spiritual leader that believes something. And he (the Pope) does. He didn't mince words on a single subject. As a matter of fact, his subject in Boston was really an evangelistic address in which he asked the people to come to Christ, to give their lives to Christ. I said, "Thank God I've got somebody to quote now with some real authority"' In the *Christianity Today* interview, referred to above, he

mentioned that while at the Vatican he had attended a Roman Catholic vesper service. This he described as 'very inspirational and Christocentric'. Is it any wonder that the Roman Church is prepared to back him? 'A great part of our support today,' he says, 'comes from Catholics' (a press conference during his crusade in San Antonio). *The Catholic Voice* for May 4th 1972 reported Dr. Graham as saying: 'I think it's wonderful for Catholics to come in and get involved in evangelism.'

What is even more alarming is Dr. Graham's practice of encouraging Roman Catholic enquirers to remain within the apostate Roman Church.

When the Pope decided that St. Christopher was no longer a 'saint', a confused Romanist wrote to Dr. Graham expressing his concern over the fact that 'many of the old confidences are being shaken' and he asked the Evangelist: 'Where will it all stop?' Dr. Graham replied to him through the 'Billy Graham Answers' column of the *Chattanooga Free Press*, and said: 'Your church is going through turbulence which both lay and clergy forces are bringing about. . . . Practices of worship may change, but the sincerity of our devotion need not be altered. . . . Above all, don't pull out of the church! Stay in it, stay close to the Lord, and use these experiences as an opportunity to help your church be what God intends and what the world needs.'

For years now, in the Billy Graham Crusades, the policy has been to refer many professed 'converts' back to the Church of Rome. In *Faith for the Family* of November, 1982, it was reported that: 'Following the New England Crusade, thousands of those who came forward are now in the process of being integrated into the Catholic Church. Meetings have taken place between the Graham Association and Catholic clergy for the transfer of these people to the Roman Church. One such meeting took place at Pope John XXIII Seminary in Weston, Massachusetts, on the

evening of June 9th, 1982, when the names of 2,100 inquirers were given to priests and nuns.' After one large Crusade in San Francisco, the Billy Graham Association investigated the results, and of the 1,300 Roman Catholics who had 'come forward' less than one out of twenty had left the Roman Catholic Church.

Modern Evangelicals would do well to consider what Dr. Lloyd-Jones has written about the Church of Rome: 'it is indeed a form of antichrist, and it is to be rejected, it is to be denounced; but above all it is to be countered. And there is only one thing that can counter it, . . . namely, a biblical, doctrinal Christianity. A Christianity that just preaches "Come to Christ" or "Come to Jesus" cannot stand before Rome for a second. Probably what that will do ultimately will be to add to the numbers belonging to Rome. People who hold evangelistic campaigns and say, "Ah, you Roman Catholics, go back to your church", are denying New Testament teaching. We must warn them.'

The 'Local Church' by-passed

'Evangelism begins and ends in the local church.' So Dr. Graham says. His words are quoted approvingly by Paul Berg in the last bulletin I received. The statement is, of course, absolutely biblical (Acts 13:2; 14:26-28; 15:40; Phil. 2:14-16; 1 Thess. 1:8). But is it true of Mission England? Did Mission England begin in the local church? Not at all! I am told that it was 'a private initiative taken by individuals with no official church representation'. The plan was developed in consultation with Dr. Graham and the B.G.E.A. team. Some time later the concept was shared at five publicly advertised meetings in various parts of the country, as a result of which groups of people joined together, each formally to invite Dr. Graham to their region. There again, does it end in the local church? There must be some doubt even about that. To help those who respond to the evangelism, thousands of 'nurture groups' have been set up. These 'provide a caring group that will

understand the needs of new Christians and show them real love'. The implication certainly seems to be that the local church, in and of itself, is quite unable to perform this function. It is therefore by-passed.

Mission England is yet another of those 'big events'.

'A great mission,' 'the largest evangelistic project of the century'; 'the biggest ever event'; and so the claims continue to be made. Leading Christian personalities have been, or are being, imported: Joni Eareckson, Evelyn Christensen, and Arthur Blessitt, to name but three. The publicity, couched in the most extravagant terms (e.g. 'The vision for Mission England is God-given. The strategy and timing are right'; 'I believe England is on the edge of a spiritual awakening' — and we seem to have heard that before) is massive and extensive. In the early part of last year, Gavin Reid suggested that the bill for this three-year project 'could well top a million pounds'. That might well prove too conservative an estimate.

One well-known evangelist wrote to me and referred to 'the depressing continuance of the "big event syndrome", to the detriment of the continuing work of the local church'. 'Nothing,' he went on to say, 'has gained prominence in the "popular" Christian press in recent years except those things organised by central committees embracing broad ecclesiology; the local church seems to have been reduced to the role of ticket agent!'

We believe that if the man-power, enthusiasm and general resources involved in this venture were directed to real biblical church-based evangelism, a great deal could be accomplished in our land. The Bible calls us back to local church evangelism. Let Christians everywhere obey that call. Divine blessing rests upon obedience.

Follow-up in the Nurture Groups

Mission England's extra-church 'nurture groups' present us with further

difficulties. In order to have a nurture group in a church, all that is required is for someone from that church to attend the 'Caring for New Christians' course, which consists of five 80-minute sessions. Since there is no basis of faith, and since churches of all persuasions are to be involved, it is conceivable that nurture groups will be linked with churches far removed from the evangelical faith. Eddie Gibbs admits this, and says: 'The nurture groups will be set in participating churches which may include non-evangelical as well as evangelical churches. An enquirer who is not a regular church member will be referred to a participating church near to his home.'

Even though efforts will be made 'to ensure that the enquirer is located in a church able to provide biblical teaching and personal fellowship', the fact remains that some and perhaps many enquirers are going to find themselves in non-evangelical churches. To refer them to nurture groups in such churches is surely unscriptural and irresponsible.

In the Great Commission our Lord commanded his people to go and make disciples and baptise them, 'teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you' (Matt. 28:20). How is that command to be fully obeyed if new Christians are directed to churches which do not firmly adhere to the historic Christian Faith? We read in Acts that the early ministers of the Gospel exercised a godly and jealous care over new converts, and the possibility we are now considering would to them have been altogether unthinkable (Acts 14:22; 15:30-35, 41; 18:23; cf. Matt. 7:15; 15:14; Gal. 1:6-9).

What of those evangelical churches which, for reasons given in this article, feel unable to identify with Mission England, and so have no nurture groups? Brian Mills says: 'If the church from which they (the enquirers) come has no nurture group, they will be redirected to the nearest church within

their denomination that has a nurture group in operation.' It is only right to say that the ministers of those churches will be informed, but the fact remains that those evangelical ministers and churches in all other respects will be bypassed.

For our part, we are unable to see how consistent evangelicals can become involved in this venture. Nor can we understand how any can adopt a position of neutrality. Mission England, sadly, is more than a compromise. It is a wholesale departure from scriptural principles and standards.

In saying this, we do not deny the sincerity or the zeal of those who are involved. Many of them have a genuine and obvious devotion to our Lord Jesus Christ and a fervent desire to see the increase of his church. Such we would love in Christ, even though we must strongly disagree with them. In concluding, therefore, we would emphasise that it is with malice towards none, but because we believe that evangelicals *must* be alerted to the facts, that this article has been written.

The Lord grants us in this nation a mighty spiritual awakening and move his people, as never before, to engage in *true New Testament evangelism*, to the glory of his holy Name!

Footnote

¹ He was Jewish.

This article first appeared in the *Bible League Quarterly* which is edited by Mr. S. M. Houghton, Larkhill House, 4 Godwyn Close, Abingdon OX14 1BU.

Parenthood

David Kingdon

Since one of God's purposes in marriage is the procreation of children we must now devote some attention to the subject of Christian parenthood.

We must stress the adjective 'Christian' because there is much parenthood today which is not Christian. For two or three generations now parents have been indoctrinated with the belief that children must come first and that parents must bend over backwards to keep their children's love. In fact, in the West, especially in the United States, Sweden and Great Britain homes have become child-oriented. We live in what has been described as 'the century of the child'.¹

Now, contrary to what many Christians think, a child-oriented home is not according to the teaching of Scripture. So if your home is simply built around your children you must do some Bible study and you must start correcting your thinking and behaviour.

1. The Biblical View of Parenthood

The Bible does *not*, in its teaching on parenthood, centre upon the child. This comes as a shock to all who have built their child-rearing theories on the works of Dr. Benjamin Spock and others. Why do I say that the Bible's teaching on parenthood does not centre upon the child?

a. *Because the Bible is consistently against idolatry in any shape or form*

The Bible persistently directs our attention to the danger of idolatry. And it does so because of the nature of God himself. He is a jealous God (Exod. 20:5) who demands the exclusive loyalty of his people. Hence he commanded 'You shall have no other gods before me' (Exod. 20:3).

Now we are not to think of idolatry only in terms of the manufacture of idols from wood or stone — idols which are then worshipped. There are much more sophisticated forms of idolatry than that. We can appreciate this if we look at Paul's definition of idolatry in Romans 1:25: idolatry is worshipping and serving the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever.

Now to make the child the centre of the home, to indulge as so many do in baby worship, is to be guilty of idolatry — of worshipping and serving the *creature* more than the Creator. Many parents are guilty of this — the sun rises and sets on their children. They can do nothing wrong. They are always boasting about them to others. O what folly! O what idolatry! The Bible, I believe, does not make the child the centre of everything because it is deeply aware of the propensity of parents to idolise their children.

Here I believe a wrong inference has been made from the incarnation. Because the Christ-child fills the scene (and rightly so) in the birth narratives it does *not* follow that Christmas is 'the children's festival'. He *alone* in human history could be worshipped as a child (Matt. 2:11) because he was God manifest in the flesh (John 1:14). But even he had a normal, godly Jewish upbringing. He was not pampered and spoilt. We catch glimpses of this when our Lord returned to Nazareth after the amazing episode in the temple at Jerusalem when he was 12 years old. 'And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth; and he *continued in subjection to them*' (Lk. 2:51). May I say this reverently, Joseph and Mary did not have a teen-age rebel on their hands because they did not idolise Jesus — they brought him up under their

authority. He was subject to them. He was not allowed to be the hub round which their humble home revolved.

Christian parents, if the Lord of glory, in the state of humiliation, was not allowed to be the centre of the home, how much less can our children, sinful as he was not, be allowed to dominate our homes. O let us beware of the peril of child-worship — of making idols of our children. Believe me, those who make idols of their children are likely to make monsters of them.

b. Because the Bible gives the chief place to the husband

The husband is head of the wife (Eph. 5:23). For her, as we have already seen, her husband is to be served as if he were the Lord himself (v. 22). Now this means that her children can never, and must never, be accorded the place reserved for her husband. To deny his pre-eminence in her affections is tantamount to denying Christ's headship over his Church. Nor must the husband give more attention to his children than to his wife, for that is tantamount to denying that she represents to him the Church for whom Christ died (Eph. 5:25). This means therefore that the relationship between husband and wife must take precedence over their relationship to their children.

Paul brings this principle out in the order in which he deals with family relationships in Ephesians 5:21f. The general heading is 'be subject to one another in the fear of Christ'. Then he deals *first* with the wife-husband relationship, giving the prime emphasis to that (vv. 22-33), before he deals with the relationship of children to parents (6:1-4).

Now I have emphasised these two points because we live in an age when parents are subject to bondage. Often they are tyrannised by their children

because they have swallowed the notion, so beloved of the 'baby industry', that loving parents are indulgent parents who must always provide the softest nappies, the most luxurious pram, and the most expensive toys, if they want to show they really do *love* their children. Little wonder then that the century of the child is also the century of the delinquent!

Having covered some basic matters we move now to some constructive teaching.

2. Positive teachings on parenthood

A Child is God's gift to parents. 'Behold children are a gift of the Lord; (AV heritage). The fruit of the womb is a reward' (Ps. 127:3). Jacob said to Esau after their reconciliation: 'The children whom God has graciously given your servant' (Gen. 33:5).

The Bible makes it clear that God gives life (and takes it away). He kills and he makes alive (2 Kgs. 5:7 the King of Israel in reaction to the King of Syria's letter about Naaman). Specifically he either shuts the womb (Gen. 20:21 cf. 1 Sam. 1:5, 6) or opens it (Gen. 29:31). So there is nothing automatic about parenthood — it lies within God's prerogative to give or to withhold children. This being so, when God is pleased to grant to parents a child he should be thanked and praised (cf. Leah Gen. 29:35 Judah = Praise).

The gift of a child creates a new responsibility. Scripture lays upon the parents their responsibility under God to bring up their children 'in the discipline and instruction of the Lord' (Eph. 6:4). Both Testaments emphasise this responsibility (Deut. 6:4-7, Ps. 78:4-8). Now, of course, the parents have the responsibility to cherish and protect the life of the child God has given. They must care for the physical wellbeing of the child. But they have only begun to

exercise their responsibility when they have fed and provided for the child. God expects them to teach their child 'the Holy Scriptures which are able to make (them) wise to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus' (2 Tim. 3:16). God is far more interested that children should embrace the faith of their parents than that they should be star athletes as men or glamorous women.

We sin against the God we profess to love and against the souls of our children if we deny to them the privilege of instruction in the faith. God lays this responsibility upon us. We must not evade it. We must be diligent in performing it, constantly seeking his grace for a task which is beyond our own strength to fulfil.

The responsibility to instruct our children cannot be left to others. God lays the responsibility upon *parents* (Eph. 6:1). They must not palm off their responsibility to others — to school teachers or Sunday school teachers.

The responsibility is laid fairly and squarely upon us as parents. God will hold us accountable. We shall not be able to plead unfitness, lack of time or any other excuse. This is the arrangement God has made: parents are to instruct and discipline their children.

Do we wonder at the growing incidence of drug-taking among young people when selfish, socialising parents leave their children to fend for themselves? Do we wonder at the break-up of so many marriages when as children so many of today's divorcees have not received *parental* proper example, instruction or discipline?

Particular responsibility is laid upon fathers (Eph. 6:4; Col. 3:21 cf. also 1 Tim. 3:4-5). The father is the head of the household, so he bears a direct responsibility to God. God holds him especially accountable (Gen. 18:19).

Why does the Bible lay such emphasis upon the father's responsibility? Because the father, not the mother, is the head of the home. This is God's structure of authority. Now this does not mean that the father cannot allow his wife to discipline and instruct the children. The Bible clearly allows for the mother to exercise discipline and to teach. (Prov. 31:1, 26. See also 2 Tim. 1:5; Titus 2:3-5.)

However it is to be stressed that the husband must remain in control and be aware of what is happening. God does not allow him to hand over personal responsibility to his wife. So, for example, he will not allow his wife to send the children to a youth organisation in a church where the Gospel is denied. He will insist that she does no such thing because God holds him accountable for bringing up the children in the faith once delivered to the saints (Jude 3).

There must be *unity* in this matter — otherwise a tension is created in the minds of the children — 'father believes one thing, mother another — what are we to believe?'

It is worth noticing that in the early Old Testament period when God spoke through Moses to *fathers* about their responsibilities there were already those to whom God could have allowed the delegation of the responsibility to instruct children. There were the priests, skilled in the interpretation of the law. But God did not permit the responsibility to be given into their hands. There were the *levites* who served the altar — but God did not lay the responsibility upon them. There were the *elders* of Israel (Exod. 3:16) but they were not given the task. An Israelite father could have pleaded that any of these men were more suited to the task than he. He could have argued that they knew more of God's revelation than he did. But the fact is God in

his wisdom laid it down that fathers were to be responsible. Why? Because if the husband is to be the head of his wife he must also be head of the children, that is, under God he must be responsible for their upbringing, both physical and spiritual. He cannot delegate this responsibility to another man or woman outside his family without undermining his headship.

Furthermore, when the husband is responsible *he integrates example and instruction* within the life of the family. He demonstrates how the faith he teaches relates to all of life. So religion is not a Sunday thing, like a roast dinner, but an all the week thing, the reality of which is demonstrated day by day. The home is the chief place of instruction in Scripture.

And there is another point. *The father should know his children*, and have more contact with his children, than anyone else save his wife. This comes out in Deuteronomy 6:7 where a combination of formal and informal teaching in the sense of everyday family life and work is described. Also in Exodus 12:26 we see that children's questions should be dealt with as they arise by fathers especially, and mothers as well. It is not biblical to suppose that children should be seen and not heard in the strict Victorian sense. Of course common sense is needed so that respect is paid to the seniority of adults, but spiritual discussion where it can be encouraged with everyone participating is a joyful and edifying occupation.

Parenthood is a partnership of husband and wife. The husband is the managing director, but the wife is also a director as well. Now since children are the result of the man and his wife becoming one flesh, it follows that their upbringing devolves upon the parents as partners (Eph. 5:31-33; 6:1). Hence the impor-

tance of their being both united in the faith — of being both believers. The Christian upbringing of the children is bound to suffer if there is division at this point, especially if the husband is an unbeliever. They must also be *united in prayer*, praying together for themselves as parents, and for their children. They agree before God in pleading for their children's salvation (Matt. 18:19). Also they must be *united in their view of discipline*—its necessity, its purpose and administration. They must be agreed upon the basis of Proverbs 22:6.

The husband should support his wife; he should encourage her. The wife must back up her husband, even when she with her woman's heart thinks that he is being a bit hard. The children must be aware of the fact that mother and father walk together in agreement (Amos 3:3), that they have the same objectives in view in the upbringing of their children. Their unity is demonstrated in their united concern and burden for the conversion and Christian usefulness of their children.

Who is sufficient for these things? None of us. But if God has commanded us to bring up our children in the nurture and discipline of the Lord then he will give grace to us as we are faithful in obeying his will. Never does he command his children without expressing his readiness to give grace. So then let us be diligent in the performance of our duties as parents knowing that 'The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children: to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them' (Ps. 103:17, 18).

Footnotes

¹ Dr. Alfred A. Wesser quoted p. 121 of J. Allan Petersen (ed.): *The Marriage Affair*.

The Role of Women in the Early Church

Frederika Pronk

Ever since that most unhappy moment in the history of mankind when Eve forsook her role as a 'help meet'¹ for man and disregarded God's Word by eating of the forbidden fruit, her position has been subject to various degrees of inferiority and degradation. Throughout the history of the world her position has ranged from enslavement and subjugation to tolerance and respect. Christ's coming into the world and the spread of Christianity shed new light on her position, for New Testament Christianity placed males and females on an equal footing in Christ, by stating that in 'Him there is neither male nor female'.² How this equality in Christ was to be effected in the life of Church and society has not always been agreed upon unanimously.

Conditions in the Early Church (the first five centuries, beginning with the Apostolic age) already forced the church to pay attention to the position of women. I believe that a study of the history of the Early Church and the writings of that period are most instructive in providing a historical perspective whereby to judge the women's rights movement of today. The role that women played in the early days of Christianity until it became firmly established in Europe can help provide direction to the church of today in deciding the course to pursue in the present controversy.

1. Prominence of Women

What immediately draws attention is the prominence of women in the records of the Early Church and the considerable attention given by the writings of the Church Fathers to define her proper role. This should not surprise us, since the New Testament

records give evidence of the important part played by women in the founding of Christianity. Immediately after Christ's ascension we read of women being gathered with the apostles and other disciples in the upper room in Jerusalem.³ After Pentecost the ingathering of converts consisted of 'multitudes both of men and women',⁴ and there is significant evidence that women played a prominent part in the progress of the Gospel.⁵ Because of its high ethical and moral standards Judaism had already prepared the way, for by the 'dispersion of the Jews the seeds of the knowledge of the true God and the Messianic hope were sown in the field of the idolatrous world'.⁶ Many of these proselytes and God-fearers formed the nucleus of the first Christian churches.⁷

2. Conditions of the Society into which Christianity Entered

The low ebb of the culture into which the Gospel came with its saving power and high ethical standards is described by Paul in his Roman Epistle.⁸ In such a society 'Christianity proposed a new order for a demoralized world, and it is clear that . . . it had a strong appeal to women who entered the new faith on the same basis as men.'⁹ The state was all-important and marriages were contracted to serve political ends. Especially in Greece women were the mere tools of men. Women received no education and had no rights and were considered to be no better than chattels. Their lives were mainly passed in their domestic quarters and girls merely passed from the home of their father to that of their husbands. Monogamy was the rule both in Greek and Roman society, but this did not exclude illegitimate connections. Extra marital

relationships were reserved for men only, however, and the wife had no legal or societal protection against the unfaithfulness of her husband.¹⁰ Stranger women called 'hetaerae' provided males with extra marital companionship and intellectual stimulation. These 'hetaerae' were intelligent, educated courtesans, some of whom exerted intellectual and political influence upon the men.¹¹ But because of the sharp social class stratification these women were forbidden to marry citizens. In Corinth these 'hetaerae' were attached to the temple of Aphrodite, where more than a thousand of them were employed as temple prostitutes.¹² Sexual immorality of the most lewd nature was not considered shameful. How could it be when the Greek gods were themselves engaged in shameful acts?

In Roman society women enjoyed a somewhat better standing than in Greek culture. Although a woman had no legal rights to sign a contract or will and could not act as a witness at court, she did share more in her husband's life and was honoured with the title 'domina', or 'matrona'.¹³ Roman women were also far better educated and Seneca (A.D. 3-66) reveals the existence of homes where women wielded powerful influences over their husbands.¹⁴ Because of slavery women had ample leisure time to spend in keeping up with the latest fashions in clothing, hair styles and cosmetics, and spent afternoons at the baths.¹⁵ Yet, in spite of the comparative luxury and freedom she enjoyed, the Roman woman was the living property of a husband who could lend her out at will, as Cato lent his wife to his friend Hortensius, and as Augustus took Livia from Tiberias Nero.¹⁶

This was the society into which Christianity was emerging, supplanting the immorality and the vices connected with the exploitation of women. Chris-

tianity elevated their position to one of honour and dignity.

3. The Writings of the Early Church Fathers on the Role of Women

Christianity established the sanctity of the entire family, making the marriage relationship a pattern of the mystical union of Christ with his Church.¹⁷ No longer was the woman the slave of man and the tool of lust. The writings of the early Church reflect the New Testament's teaching in regard to women's role. Polycarp (A.D. 69-155), one of the Apostolic Fathers, who ended his life as a martyr, mentions the duties of wives, admonishing them to walk 'in the faith given to them, and in purity tenderly loving their own husbands in all truth . . . and to train up their children in the knowledge and fear of God'.¹⁸ Ignatius (died c. A.D. 107) reminds 'husbands, love your wives, as fellow-servants of God, as your own body, as the partners of life, and your co-adjutors in the procreation of children'.¹⁹ The Shepherd of Hermas deals with infidelity and divorce and says to men that 'if you always remember your own wife, you will never sin'.²⁰ Titian (A.D. 110-172) in his 'Address to the Greeks' compares heathen Christian women and writes: 'all our women are chaste, and the maidens at their distaffs sing of divine things'.²¹ The famous Apologist Athenagorus writes in A.D. 177, in defence of Christianity in *A Plea for the Christians*, about the high morality of Christians. 'We are so far from practising promiscuous intercourse, that it is not lawful among us to indulge even a lustful look'.²² Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 153-217) devotes a lot of attention to define the proper role of women, giving many instructions pertaining to her duties and conduct.²³ Tertullian (A.D. 150-220), another Apologist, in a book dedicated to his wife writes: 'How can I paint the happiness of a marriage which the church ratifies'.²⁴

4. The Influence of Women

As Wives and Mothers

It is significant how important the influences of godly women were in instilling the Christian faith in members of their family. Many of the Church Fathers attribute their faith to the influences of godly mothers. Theodoret (b. A.D. 300) had 'an honourable and pious mother'.²⁵ Basil the Great (b. A.D. 329) had both a Godfearing mother, St. Emmalia, and a Godfearing grandmother, St. Macrina,²⁶ who also had great influence on her brother Gregory of Nyssa.²⁷ Nona, the mother of Gregory Nazianzen (b. A.D. 330), was one of the noblest Christian women of antiquity and by her patience in prayer wrought the conversion of both her husband and son.²⁸ The mother of Chrysostom (b. A.D. 347), Anthusa, early planted in him the seed of piety.²⁹ Probably the most well-known mother of the Early Church is Monica, the mother of St. Augustine (b. A.D. 354) to whom he paid tribute in his *Confessions and Letters*.³⁰

As Martyrs

There is no doubt that the faith and courage displayed by women as martyrs of the Church helped build their esteem and influence. Clement of Alexandria devotes a whole chapter in *The Stromata* to the fact that women as well as men are candidates for the martyr's crown.³¹ The history of the Early Church is full of names of women who gave the supreme sacrifice of their lives. History records the names of Agnes, 'a maiden of thirteen years', who steadfastly confessed and was 'put to the sword'.³² There is Caecilia, the legendary virgin and martyr who witnessed under Marcus Aurelius,³³ and Blandina a Gallic slave who showed super-human strength under torture and was thrown to wild beasts.³⁴ We read of Biblias of Lyon who first recanted, but later confessed. Agathonice of Pergamos rushed into the flames from the side of

her young son.³⁵ Irene, Casia, Philippia, Eutychia and Soter were noblewomen who died under the Diocletian persecution (A.D. 303-313). Herais, Marcella and Potamiana from Alexandria and Chionia and Agape from Thessalonica are mentioned. Quinta was stoned and Appolonia was burned during the reign of Valerius (A.D. 257-261). Ammonarion, Mercuria and Dionysia died in chains. Fortunata, Credula, Hereda and Julia died in prison of starvation under the persecution of Decius (A.D. 250-260). Collecta, Emerita, Calpurnia, Maria and her sisters Januararia, Dativa, and Donata are honoured by the Church Father Cyprian, and Quartillosia, Tertullas and Antonia died with him in A.D. 258. Donata, Secunda, Hestia, Januararia and Generosa are named among the twelve martyrs who died in Numidia. In A.D. 304 eighteen women died. Also Chrispina, Maxima, Donatilla and Secundia wore the martyr's crown. In Persia under the reign of Sapor II, Tabula and numerous other young women died a martyr's death. Other names are Domnia, Theonilla, Eulalia and Juletta. Vibia Perpetua (A.D. 203), only twenty-two years old and member of a leading family, meets a martyr's death in Carthage in spite of the entreaties of her heathen father and being the mother of an infant. Her slave and fellow martyr, Felicitas, gave birth to a child in prison. Both of them were gored to death by a wild cow.³⁶ The church historian Eusebius writes that emperor Licinius forbade women to worship together with men, visit places of worship and be taught by bishops.³⁷ Did he realise that much power of Christianity was with its women?

In Society and the State

That women were influential in bringing others to faith cannot be doubted. Even in the highest classes of society, at the emperor's court, there were women who were Christians and had great

influence. Pomponia Graecina, wife of consul Augustus Plautinus (A.D. 58), the conqueror of Britain, was the first high-ranking woman to be accused of the Christian faith. Two cousins of emperor Domitian (A.D. 81-96), Flavius Clemens and his wife Flavia Domitilla, were accused of 'atheism', that is, of Christianity. The husband was condemned to death and the wife to exile. Excavations in the catacomb of Domitilla establish that an entire branch of the Flavian family had embraced Christianity.³⁸ During the rule of Commodus (A.D. 180-192) there were many Christians at the palace, including Marcia who did many favours for Christians. During the reign of Septimus Severus (A.D. 193-211) Christian women were prominent at the court. Even Prisca, the wife of Diocletian (A.D. 303-311), under whom the Christians were most severely persecuted, is reported to have been a Christian, or at least favourable to Christianity. So was Diocletian's daughter Valeria and many others at the palace.³⁹ Some historians believe that because of the influence of Aquila Severa upon her husband Callistus (A.D. 217-222) marriage laws were revised to favour women.⁴⁰

The beneficial effects of Christianity upon the status of women and the family received its fullest expression under the emperor Constantine, whose conversion gave Christianity official sanction. In A.D. 321 he granted women the same rights as men to control their property, with the exception of landed estates. Rape of virgins and widows became punishable by death. Marriage laws making divorce more difficult and penalising concubinage and adultery were passed. In A.D. 390 Theodosius I allowed the mother a certain right of guardianship formerly exclusively entrusted to men. Thus we see that the result of a wide acceptance of Christianity had influence upon the

society and the state, resulting in the legal protection of the Christian values of the family and thereby elevating the position of the woman. No doubt, it was the witness of women exhibiting the teaching of Christianity which effected these changes, because even the 'heathen Libanus, the enthusiastic eulogist of old Grecian culture, pronounced an involuntary eulogy on Christianity, when he exclaimed. . . . "What women the Christians have!"'

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Footnotes

¹ Gen. 2:20. ² Gal. 3:28. ³ Acts 1:13-14. ⁴ Acts 5:14. ⁵ Lydia, Priscilla, Apphia, Euodia and Syntyche appear to have been instrumental in helping to establish churches. In Romans, chapter 16, eight women are named among the twenty-six persons specifically mentioned by name as helpers in the church.

⁶ Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Vol. 1, Apostolic Christianity, A.D. 1-100 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1910; reprinted ed. 1978), p. 87.

⁷ Cf. Acts 2:10; 6:5; 10:2; 13:43, etc. ⁸ Rom. 1:20-32. ⁹ Page Smith, *Daughters of the Promised Land* (Boston & Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1970), p. 22.

¹⁰ Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *The Role of Women in the Church* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1958), pp. 2-3.

¹¹ *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1977 ed. s.v. 'Women, Status of', pp. 906-916.

¹² Philip Schaff, *ibid.*, Vol. 1, pp. 355-356. ¹³ *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, *ibid.*, pp. 906-916.

¹⁴ E. M. White, *Woman in World History* (London S.W.1.: Herbert Jenkins Limited, 1924), pp. 282-283.

¹⁵ Moses Hadas, *Imperial Rome, Great Ages of Man Series* (New York: Time Incorporated, 1965), p. 132. ¹⁶ Philip Schaff, *ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 357.

¹⁷ Eph. 5:21-6:9; cf. Acts 15:20; 1 Cor. 6:13-30; Gal. 5:19; Col. 1:21; 3:5, etc.

¹⁸ Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, ed., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. I, *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1867; reprint ed. 1977), p. 34.

(continued at foot of inside back cover)

Justin Martyr A.D. 100-165

Gwynne Lloyd Williams

Justin Martyr was an influential Christian writer during the middle of the Second Century A.D. He was one of a group of writers known as the Apologists. These men wrote defending and expounding the faith to an unbelieving and hostile world. Justin is universally regarded as the ablest representative of this school.

He was born in Shechem in Palestine, to Gentile parents, probably in the year A.D. 100. Little is known about Justin's childhood apart from the fact that he was brought up as a typical pagan. Clearly his parents were people of means for Justin became something akin to an eternal student. He travelled from place to place engaged in what we might term 'a search for truth'. Justin visited all the major centres of philosophy including Athens, Alexandria and Rome.

He flirted briefly with many philosophies including Stoicism and Platonism. Yet as he travelled and listened he became increasingly disillusioned with what he saw and heard. Justin found the philosophy he was offered shallow and was horrified by the mercenary attitude of many teachers.

In sharp contrast with all this, Justin was deeply impressed by the faith of the Christians as they faced death. This was a time of gory martyrdoms and it is likely that Justin was an eye witness on at least one such occasion. At this point he was very interested in the Christian faith. Indeed it is not too much to say that God was preparing Justin for a visit to Ephesus. It was during this visit that he was brought to a saving knowledge of God.

Justin was walking alone on the sea shore for the single purpose of getting

down to some uninterrupted thought. He was not to get his solitude however. On the beach Justin met a Godly old man with whom he was soon engaged in a long conversation about Christianity. The young thinker was challenged to base his life on the word of God rather than on human wisdom. That very day, in his own words 'A flame was kindled in my soul'. What an encouragement that is for us to be bold to talk to people we meet!

It seems that Justin was in his early thirties at this time. Quite soon after his conversion he moved to Rome. There he soon earned a considerable reputation as a teacher of philosophy. Justin saw his green philosophers gown as a valuable evangelistic tool. It served as a conversation starter in that casual acquaintances would often sound him out on some issue or other. Ancient Rome paid great respect to its philosophers, many historians argue that they fulfilled almost a priestly role at this time. The opportunity was clearly too great for Justin to waste!

Three major pieces of his writing have survived. Each is concerned in different ways with the exposition and defence of the faith.

His *Dialogue With Trypho* the Jew is the longest document. As the title suggests it records a conversation with Trypho, an orthodox Jew who was probably involved in the final Jewish revolt against Rome, that of Bar Cochba from A.D. 132-135.

The *Dialogue* is an honest examination of the deep differences between two men, but conducted in good spirit. Trypho was a legalistic Jew, a conservative Pharisee. Justin on the other hand was a Christian, a child of grace.

Much of the argument was based on the Old Testament which both men regarded as the infallible word of God. The Dialogue includes valuable biographical references which Justin used to support and illustrate his case. Without this information it would be virtually impossible to construct any form of biography.

The other two major pieces of Justin's writing which have survived are both apologies. One was addressed to the Emperor Antonius Pius, the Senate and the people. The second which is much smaller was addressed only to the Senate. Both documents were written to explain and clarify the Christian faith to a generation which misunderstood — often deliberately — the nature of this relatively new religion.

Many accusations were raised against the Christians, which are absurd by our standards. Part of the problem was that much Christian activity had to be secretive because the dangers inherent in being a believer at this time were immense. Passwords, secret signs and night time meetings were often necessary, hence fostering a furtive atmosphere.

Dark rumours circulated that the communion service with its talk of the body and blood of Christ was cannibalistic in nature. It was thought that believers killed one of their number in a bizarre re-enactment of the death of Christ, and ate the body. Typically the Christian emphasis on love was misconstrued by a society which was as besotted with sexuality as our own.

It must of course be remembered that the believers themselves were not always as pure as the driven snow. In 1 Corinthians 11:21 Paul has to admonish that Church for drunkenness at the Lord's Table. Additionally there were people associated with the Church who were unsaved, yet their behaviour

would be seen as a reflection of the Church. By this time certain extreme splinter groups had also started to cause problems for their saner counterparts. Justin appears to have been only too aware of the problem. He declared 'If you know certain among us to be of this sort (i.e. evil men) do not use them as an excuse to blaspheme Christ'.

Other aspects of Christian practice were puzzling to the Romans. The very idea of worshipping someone who had suffered the indignity of crucifixion was unthinkable. It was suggested that because the Church spoke of another kingdom, its members were not trustworthy citizens of Rome. The lack of Christian temples or statues of God made others imagine that the believers were in fact atheists. The refusal of Christians to join in the regular pagan ceremonies were regarded as small minded and petty.

In common with the other Apologists Justin launched a two pronged attack on this criticism and hostility. He realised that paganism was itself very vulnerable, so it was subjected to close scrutiny. He exposed and denounced the total depravity of many areas of Roman life. Justin was familiar with the leading philosophers and attacked them for being in conflict with each other as well as for the futility of their teaching. His attack showed that he was a widely read and cultured man, and that his criticism could not be written off as the ravings of a mad man.

Having dealt with the opposition, Justin went on to give a straightforward, factual account of Christian belief and practice. He had travelled widely in Palestine, Asia and Rome and was therefore able to give a far from parochial account of the Second Century Church.

Justin gives very valuable information on the format of the Sunday morning

services. The Scriptures were read aloud and it is clear from his writing that much of our New Testament was already accorded the same status as the Old Testament. Later on in the service, the Scriptures were expounded and applied for the edification of the church. All the prayers were extemporary. It was not the sole prerogative of any one person to lead the congregation to the Throne of Grace.

The communion service was an integral part of the worship of the church. Bread and diluted wine were taken, but only those who had been baptised could share in this remembrance. Once the service was over, the elements were distributed to any needy believers who were absent for any legitimate reason. It is sad to note that Justin does occasionally show an unhealthy reverence for the actual elements themselves. This trend was to develop with a few honourable exceptions until the Reformation.

The whole service was led by a 'Presider' who was a man of equal stature to the rest of the congregation. There is no hint in Justin's writing of the autocratic power which later church leaders wielded. A collection was taken up and distributed to the poor. The service concluded with the kiss of peace.

When a baptismal service was held it was always as a prelude to the worship of the church. Candidates were given considerable instruction and were subjected to careful questioning before they were immersed.

There are aspects of Justin Martyr's theology which deserve further discussion. Many writers from within the Reformed community have doubted the value of apologetics as a whole. In *R.T.* no. 62, p. 5, David Kingdon discussed the role of Dr. Lloyd-Jones as an apologist. In the course of the article

Kingdon shows the importance of demonstrating that the faith is capable of an intellectual defence. Apologetics are also valuable in that they show up the weaknesses of those who try to attack the faith.

Other areas of Justin's writing are not so worthy of defence however. He believed that Christianity was a philosophy which deferred from all other systems only in that it was based on revelation rather than on human wisdom. This led him to assert that the Gospel was merely the best philosophy in the world. Clearly this is an erroneous position. The Christian faith is much more than a system of thought. It is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.

It is in his doctrine of Christ that Justin probably made his gravest error. In common with the other Apologists he used the thought forms and expressions of contemporary Platonism a good deal. According to the Platonist God is so superior to the created world that absolutely no contact is possible between the two. Thus Platonism was at complete variance with the Biblical teaching of Christ as the God-man. For them it was the impossible that God's Son should be born of a virgin in Bethlehem.

At this precise point Justin made his major error. When his philosophical ideas were in direct conflict with Scripture, Justin tried to accommodate both. Thus he formulated his doctrine of Christ, which was incidentally similar to that of the other Apologists. Justin maintained that Christ revealed God only in the sense that he communicated certain truths about him to humanity. There is also a tendency in Justin's thinking to make Christ into an impersonal force, cut off from history. Again that is a mistake of the Platonist.

To balance these major errors, several facts must be borne in mind:

1. Justin was a Christian just like you or I. He was not a perfect man, but one pressing towards the mark. We do any leader a great disservice by expecting perfection from them this side of heaven.
2. Justin did not have twenty centuries of Christian thinking to help and guide him. The full implications of his position may well not have been obvious at the time. Although he did of course have the Scriptures, the most valuable guidance of all.
3. The writings of Justin were not the academic words of a pedantic scholar. He wrote as a dying man to dying men. As such he is unwavering in his assertion that salvation is found not in knowledge or philosophy but in Christ alone. Much of his work is heartwarming, especially his burning love of the unsaved. Because of the cruel suffering to which they were subjected, many Second Century Christians hated the heathens. Justin loved them.
4. In the *History of Christian Doctrines* (Banner of Truth, 1973), Louis Berkhof makes the telling point that the Apologists were by very nature defenders of the faith. Any defence is bound to reflect the constitution of the attack. This helps to explain why Justin emphasised the rationality of the faith. Berkhof also points out that it is quite proper to see Christianity as more than a religion of experiences. There is an intellectual side to the faith, salvation does not by-pass the mind. Truth is not only something to be experienced, it can be known and defined.

Towards the end of his life, a fellow philosopher called Crescens caused many problems for Justin. It is more

than likely that he was motivated by jealousy and pride. Justin was a very popular teacher and had overpowered Crescens in public debate more than once. Justin made a profound point against Crescens, 'If he lashes out at us without studying Christ's teaching he is most unscrupulous . . . if he has studied it and fails to understand its greatness . . . there is all the more reason to call him ignoble and unscrupulous.' It seems that Crescens brought Justin's faith to the attention of the authorities. It is a sad comment on the times that they acted against someone whose only crime was that of being a Christian. On the other hand Crescens was a vile character and a paedophile to boot, but no action was taken against him.

In A.D. 165 a group of seven Christians including Justin, was arrested during an outburst of anti-Christian feeling in Rome. The seven were ordered to sacrifice to the state gods, but refused. Justin commented: 'No right thinking person falls away from piety to impiety.' The seven were subjected to arduous questioning and were threatened with flogging and death. Finally the brutal prefect Junius Rusticus sentenced them to death.

Shortly before his death Justin was taunted 'Do you think that you will ascend to heaven?' His answer was characteristic, 'I do not think so. I know.'

So it was that this man of God met his end. Happily there was none of the relic worship or other superstition which often obscures later martyrdoms. Yes, Justin was a fallible man, but could not our orthodoxy benefit from a splash of his zeal and calm assurance? There is no greater epitaph to Justin than one which he himself supplied. When under sentence of death, in what is probably an allusion to Matthew 10:28 he said 'You can kill us, injure us you cannot.' Amen to that!

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FOOTNOTES (continued from page 28)

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 81. ²⁰ Ibid., vol. II, *Hermas, Tatian, Athenagoras, Theophilus, Clement of Alexandria*, p. 21. ²² Ibid., p. 79.

²³ Ibid., pp. 283-291; pp. 431-433. It would be very instructive and interesting to quote Clement extensively on his views on women's fashions in dress, hairstyles, make-up, exercise, behaviour in church, and other matters.

²⁴ Philip Schaff, *ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 364-365.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 881. ²⁶ Ibid., p. 894. ²⁷ Ibid., pp. 905-906. ²⁸ Ibid., pp. 909-911. ²⁹ Ibid., p. 933. ³⁰ *The Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers*, First Series, Vol. I, pp. 50-138. ³¹ *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. II, pp. 491-521.

³² Philip Schaff, *ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 70. ³³ Philip Carrington, *The Early Christian Church*, Vol. I, *The First Christian Century* (Cambridge: University Press, 1957), p. 299.

³⁴ Philip Schaff, *ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 52. ³⁵ Philip Carrington, *ibid.*, Vol. II, *The Second Century*, p. 191. ³⁶ Philip Carrington, *ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 425-427. ³⁷ Ibid., pp. 95-97. ³⁸ Philip Schaff, Vol. I, pp. 374-375. ³⁹ Ibid., Vol. II, p. 65. ⁴⁰ C. Gerlings, *De Vrouw in het Oud-Christelijke Gemeenteleven* (Amsterdam: A. H. Kruyt, n.d.), pp. 90-91.

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