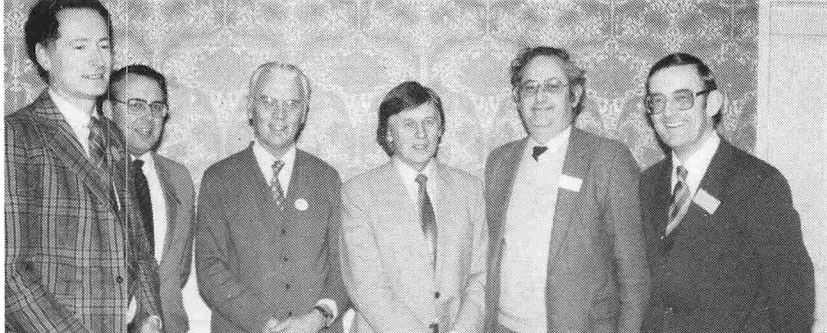


REFORM- ATION TODAY'84



CAREY MINISTERS' CONFERENCE *Robin Dowling inside cover*

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Geoff Thomas, Keith Davies, Douglas Jones, Peter Anderson, David Kingdon and Stuart Olyott at the Carey Conference

The Carey Conference 1984

This year's Carey Conference was the best yet! At least, that was my view, having attended several, and appears to have been the view of others who have attended more. The numbers who came showed a considerable increase on the previous year, the weather at Swanwick in Derbyshire was milder than normal, and the quality of the meals well above average. Fellowship in between the conference sessions was, as always, stimulating.

However, what made this year's 'Carey' so profitable was the overall standard and wide-ranging relevant nature of the sessions themselves. The historical dimension was not forgotten. David Kingdon gave a paper on John L. Dagg (born Virginia, 1794) which was a challenging biography cum analysis of his theology. The problems ('thorns') of life in 'the ministry' was tackled by Douglas Jones. The life and being of a local church was ably focused upon by Keith Davies and the use of rock-music in evangelism was challenged in a paper entitled 'Pop Goes the Gospel' by Peter Anderson, co-author of the controversial book of the same title. The prayer and sharing session included news from as far afield as New Zealand, Pakistan and Argentina. The evening ministry by Stuart Olyott was clear, simple and powerful. He spoke, on successive evenings, on the nearness of God and the 'witness' of God.

To me three papers stood out. This was the view of others to whom I spoke. Don Garlington gave an address entitled, 'The Challenge to Produce a New Testament Theology', in which he brought the discipline of biblical theology to bear in defining what he called 'the normal Christian life'. John Benton also used the biblical theological approach in stimulating thinking on the nature and content of the worship of God. He emphasised that, under the new covenant, all of life becomes worship (Romans 12:2) — as had been the case in the Garden of Eden. Don Carson expounded, 'The Challenge to Encourage God's People in Barren Times'. He certainly succeeded in encouraging us! By exemplary exegesis he pointed up the meaning of the assertion of Jesus that the least in the kingdom is greater than John the Baptist. He consolidated the encouragement this gave by enlarging on the 'revival' in French-speaking Quebec, which began ten years ago and continues to this day. Obtain the cassettes of these addresses! They will challenge your thinking and warm your heart.

Robin Dowling.

With the photographs in this issue, which were taken at the Carey Conference, there are references to some of the expositions which were given.

Editorial

On the back inside cover there is depicted a ship on the rocks. Does that accurately illustrate British evangelicalism? If attendances at Reformed ministers' conferences, whether at Leicester or at the Carey Conference described opposite, are anything to go by, then the answer is no. However the Reformed constituency is only a small part of British evangelicalism. Many churches are in peril because of the chaos caused by claims of apostleship and new revelations which subjects are addressed on pages 23 and 26.

An American assessment of Baptist history

Dr. James McGoldrick of Cedarville College, Ohio, wrote in *R.T.* 68, page 20, 'one cannot on the basis of documentary evidence conclude that modern Baptists and Anabaptists are causally related'. With regard to the doctrines of grace that is surely correct as was ably demonstrated by Dr. McGoldrick. However when we consider the doctrine of the Church it is a different matter. The review of the book by Donald F. Durnbough (see page 15) should help to maintain a balance of how much we owe to the Anabaptists.

Apostles Today? Why not?

The uniqueness of the apostolate was that apostles were the witnesses of the resurrection and were commissioned personally by the risen Lord himself. They were instruments of revelation. As such they formed the foundation of the Church. We cannot now say like Paul, I received this from an audience with the Lord (1 Cor. 11:23, Gal. 1:11,12). What Paul preached he received from Christ direct. What we preach we receive from Scripture. We need constantly to experience the wisdom of the Holy Spirit not to receive something new, but to apply what we already have with power. In the N.T. the Greek word *apostolos* simply means messenger or one who is sent. It was used freely and was not always understood in an authoritative sense. The whole gist of the article is to emphasise the struggle Paul had to prove that he was not a mere messenger in the common sense of that word, but that he indeed possessed the authority of one specially appointed.

What it is to be under the law of Christ

Only a little can be said in three or four pages on so great a subject as God's law. The main purpose of the article is to point to warn against any diminishing of our obligation on the one hand or becoming legalistic on the other. The primacy of the Ten Commandments as distinct from the Mosaic law can be seen in such statements as Romans 13:8-10 and James 5:8-11.

The Editor is due to be in Africa until April 18th.

Front cover — Left on the picture is Michael Drake of New Zealand whose address is on the back cover of the magazine. Peter Anderson who spoke at the Carey Conference on the book *Pop Goes the Gospel* (E.P. £1.95) which he co-authored with Peter Anderson and Derek Cleave. *Pop Goes the Gospel* has been at the top of the sales chart in Christian bookshops in Britain.

Earl Blackburn is evangelising and church planting in Mormon country. Provo in Utah is 92 percent Mormon and the town famous for the Brigham Young University. He has contributed before in these pages. We welcome this material which comes from experience in an area which can be described as a stronghold of the Adversary who is the great deceiver.

The priority of Evangelism

The subject and practice of evangelism is abused by some, hated by others and neglected by most. By far, the last is the worst! While a few readers were brought up in solid churches holding to the truths of free and sovereign grace, most, including myself, were not. God has, in this century, been pleased to revive his truth once again. We have returned to biblical doctrine as contained in the confessions of our forefathers and have sought to order our churches according to New Testament practices. In striving to establish and maintain these truths and practices many have neglected biblical evangelism. Obviously I can only speak from observation which is limited. But I ask you whether this is true?

This neglect stems from several causes. Some have over-reacted to Arminianism. We have become so nauseated with decisionism and freewillism to the extent that we have fallen into a practical hyper-Calvinism. I am talking now about America but this is probably true in other countries. In condemning Arminianism, we have, in many instances, failed to offer a viable alternative. Many neglect evangelism out of ignorance. The canned approach of '1, 2, 3' or 'A, B, C' has been washed out of our minds with correct doctrine and the void has not been filled with the proper instructions on how to evangelise biblically. The question is often asked, 'What can I say to my unconverted neighbour that will be biblical and God-honouring?' The purpose of these articles, by the grace of God, is to stir us to arise and evangelise and to offer some guidelines on how to do so. We will look at, 1. What is Evangelism?, 2. The Scriptural Mandate for Evangelism, 3. Why we should Evangelise, 4. Hindrances to Evangelism, 5. Some Misconceptions about Evangelism, 6. The Message of Evangelism, and 7. Guidelines for Evangelism. (The first 3 of these in this issue.)

1. *What is Evangelism?*

The word 'evangelism' comes from the word *euangelion*. This is a word composed of two other Greek words, *eu* which means 'well' or 'good', and *angelion* meaning 'message'. *euangelion* means therefore 'good message' or 'good news' and it is where we get our word 'gospel' from. *euangelistes* literally means a messenger of good.

Ernest Reisinger says, 'Evangelism is the *communication* of a divinely inspired message that we call the gospel.' Biblically speaking and simply stated,

evangelism is the setting forth or proclamation of the good tidings of the gospel of Christ to sinners.

The best definition I have found is by J. I. Packer in *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*. Evangelism is 'so to present Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit, that men shall come to put their trust in God through him, to receive him as their Saviour and serve him as their King in the fellowship of his church'.

John Bunyan's description of 'Evangelist' in *Pilgrim's Progress* is superb! Christian when he came into the House of the Interpreter was shown a picture of the evangelist. Christian saw in the picture, as Bunyan describes, 'A man, who had his eyes up to heaven, the best of books was in his mind, the law of truth was written upon his lips, and *he stood as if he pleaded with men*' (emphasis mine).

Someone has illustrated evangelism as one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread. What a blessed illustration!

2. The Scriptural Mandate for Evangelism

God speaking to the prophet in Daniel 12:3 said, 'And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever' (emphasis mine). Five times the command, which we call the Great Commission, is given (Matt. 28:8-20; Mark. 16:15; Luke 24:46-48; John 20:21; Acts 1:8). I find it interesting that these are the last instructions given by the risen and triumphant Christ to his church and people, before his ascension. The last words of someone are extremely important and reveal their innermost heart. The last words spoken by Christ, to go into all the world and make disciples of all men, are the Church's first priority.

Paul in recounting the story of his conversation to Agrippa (Acts 26:15-19), gives us an example that is relevant and applicable in our evangelism. As we carry the gospel to men, 'we open their eyes, turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, . . .' (v. 18). It is not that we do the turning or have the power to turn men, but it is God that does it, through us, by the effectual working of the Holy Spirit!

In addition, Paul says that we are ambassadors for Christ and we have been given the ministry and very words of reconciliation. As ambassadors we are to beseech men, in Christ's stead or place, to be reconciled to God (2 Cor. 5:17-21).

Our mandate is quite clear from these few passages of Scripture; therefore we should be busy about the King's business!

3. Why we should Evangelise

1. Because Christ commanded it. The story is told of a professor who asked his seminary class this question, if God has elected and predestinated all who will

ever be saved and none else will be saved, why should we preach the gospel? The students were intimidated by the question and nobody responded. The professor began to point to individual students for an answer. Again, after several mute looks, one student timidly said, 'Well, uh, maybe, uh, because Christ commanded us to?' 'Because Christ commanded us to,' the professor exclaimed! 'Just because the Creator, the Lord of Hosts, the Redeemer, the Head of the Church, the only Potentate, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords said so! Exactly! There is no better reason than that in all the world!'

Since Christ has commanded us to disciple all nations, we are to evangelise; whether we feel like it or don't feel like it; whether we 'have a burden' or 'don't have a burden'; whether we want to or don't want to. Even if an angel were to announce from heaven that all of the elect have been converted, we are still commanded to preach the gospel 'to every creature'. The enthroned Christ has never rescinded his Word.

2. Man's nature demands it. All of mankind, since the Fall, are in such a state of enmity, depravity and inability that they will not come to Christ, obey his Gospel or heed you, his servant. J. C. Ryle used to encourage his people to pray for sinners because they would not pray for themselves and the same applies for evangelism. Since man because of his blindness and deadness will not come to Christ and his Gospel, ought not we, in compassion, carry the Gospel to them?

3. Man's present condition is another reason to evangelise. To complicate the matter of man's depraved nature, we need to remember he is also in a dangerous and urgent situation. The wrath of God abides upon him that believes not and it is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness. In just a short while the wicked shall not be; and God's wrath waits to crush all outside of Christ. Sinners are in urgent need of mercy and salvation!

4. The preaching of the Gospel is the only means by which sinners are saved. Paul's brilliant argument in Romans 10:13-17 should dispel any beliefs to the contrary. Faith comes as the Spirit of God creates it, through the hearing of the Word, and sinners hear the Word of God only as we proclaim it to them.

5. We should evangelise because this redounds most to the spreading of the fame, power, might, grace and love of Christ the mighty Saviour. This world is so filled with those who hate our Christ and his blessed Gospel, we should be zealous to spread abroad his fame and tell of his excellent greatness. Nothing so glorifies God as the making known of the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ to this world of darkened sinners (Eph. 3:8-10).

6. Evangelism weakens the kingdom of Satan. God promised Abraham that his descendants would possess the gates of their enemies (Gen. 22:17) and since Christ the Lord defeated our Adversary and spoiled all principalities and powers

at the cross (Col. 2:15); we, the seed of Abraham through faith, are heirs of this promise. Therefore we should militantly advance against Satan's dark kingdom with the message of the cross. This will surely weaken his domain and bring precious souls into the kingdom of God's dear Son. John Bunyan enlarges upon this and the next point in *The Jerusalem Sinner Saved*, with unusual power.

7. We should evangelise because the unrepentant are left the more without excuse. They are without excuse already (Rom. 1:20), but in giving them the gospel they are left, as Bunyan states, '... in a deplorable condition, and it will also stop their mouths and cut off all pretence of excuse at that day.' And their remembrance of an offer of mercy extended to them will be their constant companion in the Lake of Fire (Rev. 21:8).

8. The fallacy of modern evangelism is another reason to biblically evangelise. We live in a day of great deception. This deception does not always come from the cults and false religions, but many times from professed Christians who claim to believe the inerrant Scriptures. They believe the mentioning of sin and its fruits are counter-productive. God's law, the Ten Commandments, is considered outdated. Election and total inability are thought to be heretical and the preaching of repentance is viewed as adding works to salvation by grace. Anything that is negative is to be omitted. Modern evangelists scoff at the necessity of conviction of sin and the effectual drawing of the Holy Spirit. The pastor of the reputedly 'largest Baptist church in the world', located in Hammond, Indiana tells people that while you are waiting for the Holy Spirit to convict and draw sinners, go out and win four or five of them to the Lord. Christ is presented as a panacea for all personal problems rather than an emancipator from the thralldom of sin. The subject of hell and eternal punishment is seldom preached and holiness is just a little too old fashioned for this 20th century.

In the wake of all of this, souls are left disenchanted and crushed when they discover their 'simple sinner's prayer' did not lead them to God and his salvation. This is why there is an uncountable number of unregenerate 'carnal Christians'. We must combat these errors of modern evangelism by proclaiming the full, unadulterated gospel of the grace of God!

9. Evangelism is God's method of building churches and extending his kingdom. Many church leaders are perplexed because there is a general decrease in church attendance across the world (thankfully, there are exceptions). They hold seminars and conferences; they form committees and panels and after much deliberation, certain recommendations are sent back to the churches. The implementation of the recommended changes produces little, if any, result. Doing the work is better than talking about it! Conferring is good only if it leads to action!

The lost time and wasted energies could be avoided if pastors taught their people to make a personal conscientious effort to speak to their friends



David Kingdon, Don Garlington and Bob Sheehan

J. L. Dagg: *His Life and Theology* was the subject presented by David Kingdon at the opening session of the Carey Conference in January. John L. Dagg was born in 1794 in Virginia and lived to be over 90 years old. He was a man of profound thought which is reflected in his manual of theology which in 1982 was published in one volume. The first section consists of 379 pages and covers the doctrine of God, the will and works of God, the fall and present state of man, the person and work of Christ, the Holy Spirit, the doctrines of grace, and eschatology. David Kingdon pointed out that apart from the second book on the doctrine of God which is marred a little by philosophy the materials are of the top rank. Rather than survey the views of others the materials by Dagg are expository and direct. The second section included in the one volume republication consists of about 300 pages and embraces the doctrine of the church, its membership and ordinances. There is a very unusual section dealing with washing of feet which in America has been an issue in some Baptist churches.

THE PRIORITY OF EVANGELISM *(continued from page 5)*

about Christ and eternity whenever the opportunity is given. History has shown that when the Lord's people make this effort churches grow and God's kingdom is extended in the earth.

10. The last reason we should evangelise is that churches and individuals will become stagnant if they neglect this command. Ernest Reisinger states, 'The church that does not evangelise will fossilise, that is, dry up and become useless to Christ and the world.' I am convinced one reason numerous churches have a lot of strife and problems and the reason why many Christians are cold and lifeless is because they have not evangelised. They have taken in and have not given out. They have, in effect, become like the Dead Sea, static, stale, heavy, lifeless and useless.

Christ promised to be with his church and people until the end of the world (Matt. 28:20). Donald MacLeod has helpfully reminded us concerning the great commission that the powerful presence of Christ with us is conditioned upon our going into all the world. If we are to shake off our stagnancy and have Christ's presence in our hearts and lives, we must go out into the world, *where he is*, and with him, seek his lost sheep (Luke 15:3-7). May God give us grace to shake off this lethargy and arise and evangelise! ☐ ☐ ☐

Studies in Biblical Theology

The Progression of Revelation in the New Testament,¹ Part One.

This is the fourth in a series of expositions by Don Garlington of Durham, England.

The 'normal Christian life' is a subject of enduring interest to the church of Jesus Christ. And this is understandable, because the believing conscience is always sensitive to what the Word of God requires of those in saving relationship to the Lord Jesus. However, a tender conscience is not enough in itself to define the will of the Head of the church for his body. Because the conscience always follows the lead of the mind and understanding, it is necessary for the Christian to study the Word and to reflect thoughtfully upon its content. Therefore, in this study of the progression of revelation in the New Testament we are presented with the opportunity to apply some of the more important principles of biblical theology (as seen in previous studies) in order to decide for ourselves what is the normal and on-going life of the Christian believer.

As I see it, the most pressing issue for those of us who live in this latter part of the 20th century is whether the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit (e.g., tongues, healing, prophecy) are to be regarded as normal and normative (i.e., required) for the church. I realise that even to speak of 'extraordinary' gifts of the Spirit begs the question, because many in our day are saying precisely that these manifestations of the Spirit are not *extraordinary* but *ordinary* and normally to be expected. We are being told, in other words, that there is something wrong with traditional historic Protestantism because of the absence by and large of such spiritual gifts in our churches. So, in a sense I am assuming my conclusion from the outset; but I am doing this on purpose in order to focus our attention on the key issue. Again, that issue is this: does the New Testament lead us to believe that *charismata* (i.e., spiritual gifts) such as tongues, healing and prophecy are *indispensable* for the life of the church in the 20th century and that without these our congregations are defective and less than God-honouring?

The answer to this question is to be sought by applying the proper *method* to our study of the New Testament. In previous 'Studies in Biblical Theology' I have attempted to say that we must understand the Bible as a book which came to be written out of God's acting in history to save his people. As a rule, when God did something for his people's redemption this was written down so that you and I could read and understand. Since the Lord did not do everything at one time to save his church, the Bible was not written all at one time. This is a simple and common sense idea, but growing out of it are at least two important principles for our reading of Scripture and our quest to determine what is the normal Christian life.

The first principle is that God's Word as a whole displays both a process and a progress as the Lord reveals himself. This means that Scripture is to be viewed as the historical unfolding of the mind of God, and this historical unfolding is both *forward* moving and *upward* moving. We can think, for example, of a line which not only goes forward but slopes upward as well. The Bible is organised as a time-line of events. But this means more than one event following another event. It is just as important for us to realise that each act of God leads to a higher degree of fulfillment. The Bible does take us forward in history, but it also takes us higher up into God's purposes until finally we hear God speaking in his Son — and there is no higher speaking than this.

The second important principle is that the whole of Scripture can be divided into separate blocks of time known as *epochs*. These epochs are distinct from each other. For example, the time of Abraham is not the time of Moses or the prophets. Yet at the same time these blocks of time are not isolated from each other. It is not as though a new world begins when we pass from Abraham's time to that of Moses. By way of an illustration, think of the whole of the Bible as a rectangular box divided into compartments by a series of dotted lines. Notice that the lines are not solid: that would mean that the compartments have no contact with one another at all. Rather, the lines are dotted because there is 'ebb and flow' between the compartments. In other words, what God does in one epoch has its effects in other epochs as well. And the more God talks the more he says. One block of time not only repeats what the previous one said but it expands it as well. Once again, we see here a process, and this process reaches its high point when we come to the New Testament Scriptures and hear the Lord say: 'This is my Beloved Son, hear him.'²

Now, if these two principles are important for understanding the whole Bible, they are important for understanding the New Testament in particular; and when we come to understand the New Testament according to these principles we can answer the question, 'What is the normal Christian life?' The New Testament, in other words, is divided into sections, and these sections display the idea of process and progress. Once we see that there is movement from one stage to another even in the New Testament we are in a position to know what the will of Christ for the church is.

Before I come to speak of this movement directly I want to stop to underscore something else important about the New Testament. That is, the New Testament is a unit and must be read as a unit. One word which describes the unity of the New Testament is 'indivisible', and another one is 'organic' (i.e., the New Testament grows together as one body). As we have said, it is true that the New Testament moves from one stage to another, but it is equally true that it is *one* epoch in itself and not two or more epochs. God did speak to the fathers by the prophets in many parts and many ways, but now his speaking comes as a whole unit in One who is his unique Son.

What I have just said implies two further things of importance for our approach to the subject of the normal Christian life. In the first place, we are not to read

the New Testament in a manner which is artificial and over-simplified. It is true that as we move from the gospels to the book of Acts and then on to the epistles and finally the book of Revelation we hear God saying more and more. But this does not mean that an earlier part of the New Testament becomes irrelevant simply because it is earlier in time than other parts. There are always areas of overlap and interaction, and the *whole truth* is never to be found in one portion of the New Testament only. Secondly, since the New Testament epoch is indivisible and organic, the earlier phases of its movement forward anticipate the later ones, and the later ones reflect upon and presuppose the earlier ones. A useful illustration of the point is that of Christian baptism. John the Baptist is the first one in the New Testament to baptise. He calls upon the Jewish nation to repent and to express its repentance outwardly by submitting to his water baptism. But John prophesies that Christ would come and baptise as well, not with water as he has done but with the Holy Spirit and fire. Our Lord, then, does baptise with the Spirit and fire, both during his public ministry (although he did not physically baptise people) and more especially on the day of Pentecost when he pours out Spirit and fire on the infant church. Finally, as believers you and I have been baptised by the Lord Jesus with the Holy Spirit, and our water baptism stands as a symbol of this. All of this shows how Christian doctrine and practice (in this case baptism) is established by the historical unfolding of the purposes of God in the pages of the New Testament.

In another article I will speak directly to the subject of the normal Christian life as determined by the progress of revelation in the New Testament. But before concluding this article I want to prepare the way for our next study by again using Christian baptism as an illustration of an important principle. It is beyond dispute that the church in its mission of discipling the nations is to baptise. This is on-going, normal and normative for Christians in every generation. However, what we call Christian baptism occupies the last link of a chain which commenced with the preaching of John the Baptist. As we said, John baptised with water and prophesied that Jesus would baptise not with water but with the Holy Spirit and fire. In fulfilling John's prophecy our Lord baptises, we might say, on two levels: during the 'days of his flesh' and on the day of Pentecost. Moreover, our own baptism with the Holy Spirit is an extension of the day of Pentecost, and our baptism with water symbolises that we have been incorporated into Christ by the Spirit of God. All of this is familiar, but I refer to it in order to say that Christian (water) baptism is organically connected with the whole baptism process begun by John, but Christian baptism does not repeat in itself every step of the process leading up to it. In other words, John the Baptist does not appear on the scene every time a new convert is baptised, and we do not expect that tongues of fire manifest themselves when a person in our day receives the Holy Spirit.

The principle I have just sought to illustrate is this: something which is normal and on-going for us can be the outgrowth of earlier events in redemptive history) without necessarily reproducing those events. It is in this way (as

illustrated by baptism) that we approach the New Testament in order to determine what is normal for our churches and, more importantly, what Christ the Head of the church demands of his people. It is by tracing out the development (movement) of the *entire* complex of new covenant revelation that we arrive at our understanding of the normal Christian life. Another way to put it is to say that although a certain practice or experience may have been common at one point in the early church, it does not follow that this practice or experience continued to have the same significance for the whole of the New Testament epoch. And if a thing was not normal for the entirety of the New Testament, we cannot be forced to accept that it is normal for us today.

Everything I have attempted to say in this article is only a preparation for the next one, in which the matter of the normal Christian life will be addressed more pointedly. But this preparation is necessary, and as such it will be good to summarise the ground which has been covered.

First of all, we have asked if certain gifts of the Spirit constitute for us the normal Christian life. Secondly, we have said that in order to answer the question we must apply the correct method of study to the New Testament. This method is that of seeing the New Testament follow the same pattern as the whole of Scripture, i.e., the pattern of process and progress. Furthermore, the New Testament forms one of the epochs of special revelation and is to be read as a unit which is indivisible and organic. Yet even though the New Testament is a whole epoch in itself, there are still stages to be seen in its movement from the gospels to the Revelation. It is this movement which defines for us what is normal for today.

Notes

¹ This article is a modified version of an address given at this year's Carey Conference.

² T. D. Bernard (*The Progress of Doctrine in the New Testament*, pp. 26-27) is worth quoting in this connection. 'The Bible includes within itself a world of anticipation and retrospection, of preparation and completion, whereby various vital relations are constituted between its several parts. These relations enter as really into the scheme of Scripture as do the several parts themselves; and must be rightly understood and duly appreciated, if the doctrine, which the Book yields upon the whole, is to be firmly grasped by the student or fairly presented by the preacher.'

CAREY FAMILY CONFERENCE

Leeds Polytechnic, Beckett Park, Leeds

Monday, July 30th to Saturday, August 4th

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Disaster of Divorce

by Jack M. Gray

We have seen how delightful — and dangerous! — dating can be. We have also seen how the church helps put the wheels on the carriage of marriage. It was once true that if you married someone from a Christian background, particularly if they were of your own denomination, it was almost a certainty that the marriage would last for life. Times have changed and now the shadow of divorce hangs over every home, often from the very beginning. The disaster of divorce has crept into every corner of our culture and has presented a great new challenge to Christian marriage. It seems that everywhere around us the wheels are coming off the carriage of marriage. In a divorce-riddled age like ours, what can the church do to help the wheels of marriage keep rolling?

Leading Causes

Certainly we can identify some of the leading causes for divorce in our culture. Let's think about them briefly.

1. There is a *break-down of the God-given roles* of men and women. There is something drastically wrong with our society when during times of recession women can find work and men cannot. There is something wrong with our society when women can work for a few days a week at a part-time job and earn more than the husband makes in a full week of work. God made man incomplete. Adam needed a helper — a 'help meet for him'. When that helper pursues a career outside the home which is as successful, or more successful, than the husband's, there is a great potential to lose the wheels of marriage. That is not to say that wives may pursue no other career than homemaker. It does mean that if

another career is pursued, somehow the God-given roles must be maintained. The family farm is an example of a household in which the wife often works as hard on the farm as the husband and there is a low divorce rate. That is because the roles are not compromised and both careers are for the common good of the family.

2. *Working conditions today increase temptations* to break the seventh commandment. As the lines between men's and women's work is blurred, there is more interaction between the sexes and more opportunity for adultery. The increasing casualness of the office and the emphasis in modern dress all increase the temptation level. For both men and women, sex outside the marriage relationship is much easier today than in previous generations. The church must call for morality in the market-place.

3. The media, particularly television, present a *non-Christian view of marriage*. Commitment in marriage is often scorned and marital unfaithfulness exalted. In episode after episode, television seeks to undermine the clear command of God. If traditional values of the Bible are championed, often they are done through someone who is caricatured as a 'kook' (quirk or a queer) so that his view is ridiculed rather than respected. Christians need to keep a careful watch on the entertainment that comes into the home.

4. The most serious is the *compromise the church makes* with the standards of the world. At one time, divorce was unheard of within the confines of the Christian Church, but today even though the divorce rate is much lower

among Christians than non-Christians, it is up an alarming amount. Today every church that is serious about reaching out to others in the community needs to struggle with divorce since so many have divorce in their background. The church must reach out to those who have been divorced, yet always holding out the high standard of marriage which God pictures for us in his word.

I was recently struck by that again in our high school catechism class. When we came to the seventh commandment, we had a little quiz on what the church teaches about marriage, divorce, and re-marriage. The greatest surprise in the class was that the Bible gives only one ground for divorce. Class members said, 'What if a couple do not love each other any more?' or 'What if they just don't get along?' In some minds it seemed as if those were valid reasons for ending a marriage. Indeed, if we look at the message that the secular society is sending to the young people through the media, through work, and through recreation, it does seem that almost any reason to call it quits in marriage is condoned. That easy road to divorce was closed by Christ Himself in the clear teaching of Matthew 19.

The Bible's Teaching

In the Old Testament there had been divorce. Moses had been given permission by God to write a statement of divorce. It was actually quite easy to obtain. The Pharisees hold that up to Jesus. They say, 'Look at our society. Divorce is easy.' They could even go a step beyond the modern American culture because they could claim that God's servant Moses was the one who initiated the easy divorce policy. Christ's clear-cut answer forms the foundation for the Christian's thinking about divorce and re-marriage. Christ's teaching is so clear that there is no escaping the conclusion.

Notice how carefully Jesus replies. 'Moses permitted . . .' Moses did not encourage, Moses did not condone, the easy divorce. He permitted it. That language sounds familiar, doesn't it? God has his active will by which we are to live and God has his passive will in which he allows certain things to happen which are not in accordance with his own desires. God actively promotes good; he passively permits sin. 'Moses permitted . . .', and already the Jews knew where the answer was going. Now Jesus tells them why Moses permitted that, ' . . . their hearts were hard'. That language sounds familiar, too. Who were always characterised as having hard hearts? The people of the Old Testament who refused to listen or follow God. 'Hardness of heart' was a key phrase in describing the basic disobedience of the Old Testament people. Now Jesus is saying that the same serious sin which caused their ancestors to lose favour with God and sent them into the years of captivity from which most never returned, is the sin involved in divorce. Call it stubbornness, a refusal to listen to reason, turning a deaf ear to God — they had done it in the Old Testament to God and they did it to their wives. Jesus puts that Old Testament practice in such a light that all can see the seriousness of the sin. Then Jesus goes on to make the standards even higher.

It is important to see the shift here. We know that in the matter of marriage God altered the standard somewhat from the Old to the New Testament. For example, polygamy was permitted in the Old Testament; it is not in the New. Divorce was permitted in the Old Testament; not any longer. Jesus confronts them with the fact that this was not the way God made human beings. He made one wife for Adam. From the beginning marriage was with one spouse for life. Jesus' command is to return to that practice God estab-

lished at the beginning of the world — one husband, one wife, for life. That is God's plan; that is what he teaches in the seventh commandment; that is the way we are to live. If Jesus took such a stand in a culture of easy divorce, we can do no less! The church must do everything in its power to keep the wheels on the carriage of marriage. It is our responsibility as a church to do everything in our power to eradicate the disaster of divorce from the family circles of our congregation, and to help cleanse our culture from the curse of family breakdown. Christ's call is clear to us all!

Ground for Divorce

Yet Christ does not completely close the door on divorce. He inserted the exceptive clause 'except for marital unfaithfulness'; that is, breaking the seventh commandment. Some contemporary Christians are so concerned to preserve marriage that they say this was a later addition by a scribe and ought not to be taken seriously. We accept the sacred Scriptures as they are given to us and do take this statement seriously. But how are we to understand the exceptive clause?

God, and society, define marriage in terms of our sexuality. As we saw, when God brought Eve to Adam there was no elaborate wedding ceremony, but the marriage was completed, or consummated, by their sexual relationship. The state still recognises that as the basis for marriage. A couple can have an elaborate marriage ceremony, all the papers can be properly signed, but if the marriage is never consummated they can go to the courthouse and have it annulled — that is, the state says it never occurred. When one of the parties breaks that intimate bond which God established as the basis of marriage, then there is the possibility of divorce. The verb tense that Jesus uses here is on-going marital unfaithfulness, and

that is why one incident of unfaithfulness is not grounds for divorce. Yet if one partner makes that a part of their life-style, then the other party may be divorced.

All divorce initiated or condoned which is not on the basis of adultery subjects that person to the admonition of the church. It is a sin which not only tarnishes the Christian, but strikes at the very fabric of God-ordained society. If continuing, unrepentant adultery is the reason for divorce, the other party in the marriage may be divorced and remarry without any reprimand from the church.

Our Christian and Church Concern

Many today are saying, 'Why should the church concern itself with that? Isn't that a private matter among consenting adults?' The church accepts the responsibility of admonishing those who stray in marriage for three reasons:

1. It is the clear command of Christ how we should live;
2. It is a public transgression of the clear teaching of the seventh commandment;
3. It is a sin which is striking at the very heart of our contemporary society. We are sowing the wind and when we rear a generation of children with divorced parents, when this generation marries, we will be reaping the whirlwind. The church has no choice but to defend with vigour the strong marriage and Christian family.

The Continental Congress on the Family summarised it this way: 'We affirm the permanence of marriage as the intent of God. We believe that divorce is contrary to God's intent for marriage. Divorce is also a profound human tragedy which also leaves a legacy of anguish, bitterness, loneliness, and a sense of failure and a deep fear of personal relationships. We regret the ease with which divorces are obtained and believe that these divorces and



Paul Simpson has subsequently written, quote:

'Returning after five years' missionary service in a Moslem country, you cannot imagine what a blessing it was to be at the Carey Ministers' Conference at Swanwick in January.

Hardly knowing anybody at such a large gathering can make you feel alone in a crowd but by purposefully sitting next to a stranger at every meeting and meal-time, that is quickly changed. I trust that new friendships will have been made that will stand through many more years abroad.

The mission-field needs churches to expedite God's work and here at the Carey Conference were pastors representing many churches. Who more responsible to send suitable members to the uttermost parts and to pray for and support them?"

DISASTER OF DIVORCE *(continued from page 13)*

remarriages are a contributing factor to the breakdown of the family. We believe that reconciliation is an alternative much superior.'

If divorce has occurred in your home, you know the circumstances of your home situation. My heart goes out to you because you and I both know there are no winners in the wars of the family — there are only losers. Marriage can be like hell on earth, or it can be bliss beyond measure. This is the hardest sermon in the world to preach. As God's servant I have no choice but to tell you what society is doing to undermine God's clear command for our family living; as a pastor I understand and I care about your struggles and your tears, your sleepless nights and the feelings of sorrow and anguish over a marriage gone sour. God has held out a marvelous ideal for us in marriage, the picture of his own love for us. It is our duty as Christians to do everything in our power to avoid the disaster of divorce

and build the beautiful marriages that Christ himself commands. If you are divorced, we love you dearly in Christ, and we challenge you to live a chaste life now. If you are married and struggling to keep that home together, we care deeply about you, and all our resources are available to you to help preserve your home. If you have gone through the disaster of divorce, or sometimes you feel that may be just around the corner for you, you still are part of God's family. We look up to Jesus to reach the great ideal he has set for us. Only by God's grace can we succeed in approaching God's ideal for marriage. Pray for that grace in your home!

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The Believers' Church

A book review by Sharon Hulse

The Believers' Church — The History and Character of Radical Protestantism

Donald F. Durnbaugh, The MacMillan Company, 1968.

This book is a pleasure to read. The title, *The Believers' Church*, is well chosen and tells of those churches which aim to have a truly regenerate church membership. This possibility was considered by Luther, but rejected as too idealistic. He would have liked 'both a confessional church based on personal faith and experience, and a territorial church which would include all in a given area. Given the choice he would take his stand with the masses'.¹ When groups emerged which aimed at regenerate membership, Luther condemned them as extremists. These are the subject of this comprehensive popular treatment of Radical Protestantism. Durnbaugh combines a narrative and thematic approach by treating firstly the concept of the Believers' Church, secondly the history of believers' churches, and thirdly the most notable characteristics of such churches.

The enjoyable nature of this volume is enhanced by numerous anecdotes which remind the reader constantly that real people were influencing and being influenced by the issues involved. Church history is thus presented in a way that is vivid, immediate, and relevant.

What follows is a summary of the contents of *The Believers' Church* and all quotations are from the book.

A. The Concept of the Believers' Church

The ideal of regenerate church membership, yielding the term, 'believers' churches', is argued to be a more satisfactory concept than that of 'free churches'. The latter title has been used in a variety of ways: churches which are

free from episcopal control, from liturgy, or from creeds, to mention only three. The theories of free church origins are as diverse as the possible definitions. They fall into the 'sectarian school' which traces an 'apostolic succession' of dissent from the early church right through the medieval period ('God himself would not have left himself without a faithful witness in every age').² Or there is the 'Puritan school' which regards English Puritanism as the seedbed of free churches.

This view, of which W. S. Hudson is a well-known proponent, tends to disassociate English Baptists from the Radical Reformation. Lastly, the Anabaptist school, who demonstrate that the free churches came into being with the Radical Reformation. G. H. Williams and R. H. Bainton are among those who are shown to tend to this viewpoint. Bainton demonstrates that the 'left-wing' of the Reformation gave rise to the cardinal principles of a voluntary church, the separation of church and state, and religious liberty which were the distinctive features of believers' churches.

B. The History of the Believers' Church

Two representative examples of the Believers' Churches are selected for each century from the sixteenth onwards. Durnbaugh broadly follows the Anabaptist view of free church origins: 'it is with the appearance of the evangelical Anabaptists that the Believers' Church movement as such actually began'.³ He concedes, however, that some earlier movements had important features in common with the Believers' Churches, and so begins by

describing two medieval movements, the Waldenses and the Unity of Brethren.

1. *Medieval Sectarians*

The Church in the Middle Ages did not permit dissent in any form. Many were the justifications advanced for this, including Augustine's use of the Parable of the Banquet to rationalise persecution of the Donatists in his own time. Many too were the abuses within the Church which led inevitably to the dissent it so much feared. The late twelfth century saw the development of what became known as the Waldensian church, although separation from the Roman Church was very far from the founder's mind. Peter Valdes of Lyon in France (1140-1218) renounced his wealth in order to 'follow nakedly a naked Christ'.⁴ He got the Bible and Patristic writings translated into the vernacular, and ceaselessly evangelised ordinary people. His followers likewise renounced wealth, becoming known as 'the poor ones'. In 1180, Valdes formally declared the orthodoxy of his faith, he accepted all the sacraments, but four years later he and his followers were declared heretics. Many maintain that the movement was almost identical to that initiated by St. Francis of Assisi a hundred years later; the distinction between heresy and sainthood lying in the respective intransigence and flexibility of the Popes involved. Persecution led naturally to greater radicalisation. By the fourteenth century, the Waldensians, who had spread throughout France and Italy, rejected the title of Pope, clerical celibacy, monasticism, the mystical interpretation of Scripture, the cult of images, purgatory and all acts of worship not directed in the Bible. They recognised two sacraments, baptism and communion. Persecution was fierce. Eventually the Waldensians joined up with believers' churches produced by the Reformation, and there were still

30,000 Waldensians in Italy in 1968.

The other medieval movement described is the Unity of Brethren, a descendant of the movement led by Hus. It developed in Bohemia in the fifteenth century. One notable leader was Peter Chekicky, whose major emphases were: the law of love, the separation of church and state, non-resistance, the dissolution of class distinctions and the authority of the New Testament. The 'poisoned embrace' of Constantine was, he believed, the cause of the fall of the Church. The religious controversies already raging in Bohemia meant that he was silenced less quickly than he would have been elsewhere in Europe. The development of the Unity of Brethren is traced through until the time when they linked up with the Moravians under the patronage of Zinzendorf in the eighteenth century.

2. *The Radical Reformers*

The Swiss Brethren and the Hutterian Brethren are selected for discussion. These groups taught believers' baptism, the separation of church and state, and the voluntary principle. Such ideas were repudiated by Catholics and Protestants alike, the leading reformers relied on the magistrate to implement their reforms and clung to the idea of the territorial church. In 1525 those in Zurich who wanted biblical reform broke away from Zwingli who would move no faster than the city fathers allowed. They met in a home and performed believers' baptism. The leaders were severely punished for this rebellion, Hubmaier being burned by Catholics and Mantz drowned by Protestants.

The two movements are traced to the present day, as are the groups selected in the remaining historical chapters.

3. *The Separatist Puritans*

The English Baptists and Quakers are

discussed, both movements developing in the seventeenth century. Both had to suffer intense persecution.

The following vivid incident is quoted from George Fox's *Journal* and illustrates the violence engendered by religious differences in that century:

When friends were in the meeting, and fresh and full of the life and power of God, I was moved to go out of the meeting to the steeple-house. . . . So I went up to them and began to speak; but they immediately fell on me, and the clerk up with his Bible . . . and struck me on the face with it so that it gushed out with blood. . . . Then the people cried: 'Let us have him out of the Church!' and when they had got me out, they beat me sore with books, fists and sticks, and threw me down and over a hedge into a close and there beat me and threw me over again. . . . After a while I got into the meeting house again amongst friends, and the priest and the people coming by the house, I went forth with friends into the yard, and there I spake to priest and people. . . . My spirit was revived again by the power of God for . . . I was almost amazed and my body sore buised but by the power of God I was refreshed again, to him be the glory.⁵

4. *The Free Church Pietists*

Two evangelical movements of the eighteenth century are described; the Church of the Brethren in Germany and the Methodists in England. Both were accused of fanaticism by the established churches. As Bishop Butler expressed it cogently to Wesley, 'Sir, the pretending to extraordinary revelations and this from the Holy Ghost is a horrid thing, a very horrid thing. You have no business here; you are not commissioned to preach in this diocese. I therefore advise you to go home.' Of course the Evangelical Awakening was not restrained by such advice, however well-meaning.

5. *New Testament Restorationists*

During the nineteenth century several

groups aimed to go back and imitate as closely as possible the life of the Early Church. The Disciples of Christ in America and the Plymouth Brethren in England are discussed.

6. *Contemporary Expressions*

The Confessing Church in Germany during the Third Reich provides an inspiring example of the practical outworking of the doctrine of resisting state interference.

Then a section on 'New Forms of the Church' traces some interesting parallels between two modern developments and earlier believers' churches: The Church of the Saviour in America and the East Harlem Protestant Parish.

C. *The Character of Believers' Churches*

Some of the key features of believers' churches through the centuries are discussed under five headings. Among the characteristic emphases of these groups are an insistence on Discipleship and mutual service for church members; a stress on evangelism; an insistence on freedom from state control; an involvement in the needs of the wider community, and a desire for union with other believers' churches.

The chapter on Mission and Evangelism is particularly interesting. 'The paradox of the protestantism of the reformation era is that whilst it called the Church back to its apostolic faith, it was largely content to leave the apostolic mission to the Church of Rome.'⁶ Some of the incredibly ingenious arguments advanced by orthodox protestants to show that the missionary mandate no longer applies are explained. In contrast is the vision of many of the believers' churches. The Waldensians were the 'first missionaries to disseminate a considerable knowledge among the people'.⁷ The Anabaptists were the first to make the Great Commission the responsibility of every church member.

'Among the errors listed of the Anabaptists was that "anyone who has a true faith may preach, even if no-one has commissioned him: for Christ has empowered any and every man to preach when he said 'Go teach all nations' ".⁸ This was strongly opposed by Luther: 'Therefore let everyone ponder this, that if he wants to preach or teach let him exhibit the call or the commission that drives him to it, or else let him keep his mouth shut. If he refuses this then let the magistrate consign the scamp into the hands of his proper master — whose name is Meister Hans (the hangman).'⁹ There is obviously a middle way somewhere between the Scylla of muffling evangelism entirely and the Charybdis of total anarchy. Early Anabaptists had a vivid sense of mission and the Unity of Brethren, for example, sent missionaries to many different countries.¹⁰ Fierce persecution tended to mute this emphasis as the idea of the Remnant emerged but the involvement of believers' churches in the great nineteenth century missionary movement brought back the early vision.

The believers' churches have played a leading role in humanitarian movements — the abolition of slavery, improvement of working conditions, prison reform etc. — as is outlined in the section on mutual aid and service. This springs from the conviction that a believer must show acts of love for others whatever their belief. In earlier centuries this contrasted strongly with the violence shown by Catholics and Protestants. One group of Anabaptists awaiting the galleys asked, 'Where has God commanded his child, saying "Child go into the whole world, . . . teach all nations, him however who refuses to accept or believe your teaching you are to catch, torture, yes strangle until he believes"?'¹¹ Peter Chekicky stated, 'If anyone, a Jew or a heathen or a heretic or an enemy, is ever in need, then

according to the principles of love it is our duty to see that he does not die from hunger or cold or any other calamity.'¹²

This was not just theory as Durnbaugh illustrates by two moving accounts. In 1569 a Dutch Anabaptist, Dirk Williams, escaped from his home, closely followed by officials. Coming to a frozen dyke he crossed safely, but his leading pursuer fell through the thin ice. 'Williams turned back and saved him from certain drowning. Despite this he was burned slowly at the stake.'¹³

Just before Christmas Day in 1553, a shipload of Reformed refugees from England . . . were icebound in the harbour of Wismar after being rejected by Lutheran Denmark. The Wismar town council was also Lutheran and refused to have anything to do with these 'Sacramentarians'. . . . Near Wismar were Mennonites who, however, as heretics were forced to live in hiding. They heard of the plight of the travellers, raised money for them, sought out temporary jobs, and offered to give shelter to the children. . . . Later the Reformed revealed the names and hiding places of their benefactors to the Lutheran town council. These Mennonites were living up to the principle expressed by one of their Swiss martyrs, Hans Leopold, who said of them: 'If they know of anyone who is in need, whether or not he is a member of their church, they believe it is their duty out of love to God to render help and aid.'¹⁴

Perhaps the feature of believers' churches which caused most fear in the sixteenth century was their insistence on the separation of church and state, and on religious liberty. They ceaselessly pointed the paradox between the persecuted church of the New Testament and the persecuting institution which claimed to be its successor. The radical reformers died for a belief that many of the descendants of the differing persecutors would now endorse. In

What it is to be Under the Law of Christ

One of the criticisms made against the first letter to the Corinthians is that from chapter 7 onwards Paul handles special questions that vexed the believers at Corinth, but which do not seem relevant today. It is true that the nature of our marriage problems is greatly different today (ch. 7). It is true that we do not now have a problem with meats sacrificed to idols (chs. 8-10). It is true that we are not under the direct rule of the apostles now (ch. 9). It is true that the form of worship that pertained then does not pertain now (chs. 12-14). It is true that our women are not under scrutiny as to how they style their hair now (ch. 11). Nevertheless many great principles are to be extracted and applied, and perhaps no issue is of greater interest among the Reformed Baptist churches of America than the question of the law. Some of our friends have been charged with antinomianism. Perhaps the issues they have been asserting have not been properly understood. Clarity about truth is a friend as clarity will remove confusion and suspicion.

In 1 Corinthians 9:20 and 21 Paul tells us in no uncertain way that he is not under the Mosaic law but that he is under the law of Christ.

1. *The Mosaic law and the transitional period of the apostles*

The book of Acts and indeed most of our New Testament was addressed to those living in the time of change or transition from the Old Covenant to the New. A.D. 70 was decisive in bringing to a close the old period. Jerusalem was destroyed. The Temple, the priesthood and the sacrifices all came to an end. The Levitical system was finished. Up until that time the apostle Paul was prepared to observe Mosaic laws and rituals in order to pacify the Jews, win their confidence and try to bring them to Christ. For instance he agreed to Timothy being circumcised although he appears not to have agreed in the case of Titus (Gal. 2:3). We find that Paul was ready to enter into a Jewish purification rite (Acts 21:20ff.). The letters to the Galatians and the Hebrews are the

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1560 Claus Felbinger expressed it, 'God wants no compulsory service. On the contrary, he loves a free, willing heart that serves him with a joyful heart and soul and does what is right joyfully.'¹⁵

References. All are from *The Believers' Church*.

¹ *Here I Stand*, R. H. Bainton, quoted on p. 4 of Durnbaugh.

² p. 9. ³ p. 38. ⁴ p. 210. ⁵ p. 114.

⁶ *That the World may Know*, W. Ransom, quoted on p. 228 of Durnbaugh.

⁷ *History of the Inquisition of the Middle Ages*, H. C. Lea, quoted on p. 232.

⁸ *The Reformers and their Stepchildren*, L. Verduin, quoted on p. 233.

⁹ Ditto. ¹⁰ p. 233.

¹¹ Verduin, *op. cit.*, quoted on p. 251.

¹² *The Political and Social Doctrines of the Unity of Czech Brethren*, P. Brock, quoted on p. 27.

¹³ *Even unto Death*, J. C. Wenger, quoted on p. 264.

¹⁴ *Mutual Aid*, Mennonite Encyclopaedia, J. W. Freiz and H. S. Bender, quoted on pp. 272-273.

¹⁵ *The Anabaptist Story*, W. R. Estep, quoted on p. 249.

clearest statements in the N.T. to show that the old priesthood and all the Levitical rites are now fulfilled in Christ. We are not obligated in any way whatsoever to the Mosaic forms. Nor were those forms ever designed to bring salvation or to be a basis of works or merit to earn salvation. They were provided purely for teaching purposes but are now abrogated.

2. *What about the moral law?*

The ten commandments or moral law was given during the institution of the Mosaic covenant. An examination of the contents of Exodus 20 or Deuteronomy 5 shows that the decalogue requirements are strictly and entirely moral. For instance it is just as immoral now to break these laws as it was then. There are some who argue that the 4th commandment does not apply now as it did then. That is a big subject which is expounded in detail in *Aspects of Sanctification* (West. Conf. 1982, Evangelical Press). There it is shown that far from freeing us of moral obligation we are obligated now more than ever before. Indeed this is true of all 10 commandments. In the sermon on the mount our Lord takes the 6th and 7th commandments and virtually demands absolute perfection. Before you throw your hands up in horror remember the truth of the new birth and the power of the Holy Spirit. He, the Holy Spirit enables us to strive after perfection, to be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect (Matt. 5:48). Concerning the rest day (4th commandment) cessation from work and having a weekly day over which the Lord Jesus Christ rules as rest giver (not work giver), I would say that the whole of Scripture provides instruction whereby our rest day is vastly superior to that which God gave the Jews. He has always provided a day for the benefit of man. We are not now under any of the Mosaic

details concerning how we keep our day but we are under the moral obligation to delight in the Lord's Day for Christ has liberated us not for licence for worldly pleasure but pleasure in himself which excels the delight of Isaiah, see Isaiah 58:13ff.

What is the law of Christ? (9:21)

Paul says he was under Christ's law. Christ's law means the whole Bible. The law Christ gave at creation, at Sinai, through the O.T. prophets, in his earthly ministry, and through his apostles, all reveals his mind and will. It is completely misguided to say that we can abandon the Old Testament. Christ does not contradict himself. I have referred to the 4th commandment. Let us look for a few moments at the 7th commandment which in a sentence tells us to uphold the law of marriage. When did that law come into being? Answer: at the creation. The two, one male and one female, shall be one (Gen. 2:24). Never has God changed or abrogated that law as we see from Malachi (2:15). Likewise our Lord reaffirms the creation marriage law and the 7th commandment in Matthew 19:1-10. However the application of this law from a civil point of view is different. The Mosaic law required the death penalty for every kind of adultery (Lev. 20).

Because we do not now observe those Mosaic rules does it mean that we are lawless or can be careless? Not at all. Ephesians 5:22-33 expresses Christ's law for marriage and raises it to the highest conceivable level. Marriage is compared with the union of Christ and his Church. The moral obligations of married love and care are exalted, lofty, heavenly. As with the creation institution of the rest day, so with the creation institution of marriage, the whole is raised and increased in glory and significance.

No matter what area we examine the law of Christ never leads to licentiousness, lawlessness or carelessness. His hold upon us is total because he has redeemed us body, mind and soul. Our time, talents, motives and ambitions are now subject entirely to Christ who is our husband. He directs us by his law which we carefully and affectionately deduce from all the Scriptures.

Because the decalogue is comprehensive it is useful as a basis for ethical subjects. We are not likely to omit important moral issues that way. However the law of Christ as we have seen with the 4th and 7th commandments as examples is expressed progressively from Genesis to Revelation. It is the same with every moral issue. We have to examine each ethic or moral in the light of the whole Bible. The best book I know is a 500 page work by Dr. J. A. Heyns of South Africa. It is in Afrikaans and has the simple title *ETIEK*. Professor John Murray's book *Principles of Conduct*, is not as up-to-date or as comprehensive, but is highly recommended.

Freedom from legalism

When we cite the Westminster Confession of Faith or the 1689 version of it we do so remembering that we follow or adhere to such standards only inasmuch as the various clauses are supported by Scripture. Respect for the Confession is also supported by the remembrance that it is the work of a mature band of pastor theologians, not theorists merely, but ministers outstanding for their lives and ministries. The work is not the work of an individual but of many working over a number of years. That explains the quality of the material. Chapter 20 deals with Christian Liberty and Liberty of Conscience. Paragraph 2 declares that God alone is Lord of the conscience and has made it free from the doctrines and commandments of men. We are not to

make up a whole list of laws such as no alcohol, no smoking, no cinema, no lipstick, no dancing and then a whole load of do's and don'ts for the Lord's Day. That does not mean for one moment that there will not be standards set in every Christian community. For instance when it comes to recognition of officers to lead we can be sure that certain men will never even be considered because everyone knows that they are more concerned with their own pastimes and pleasures than with the rigorous demands of Christian discipleship and devotion. It is not that we grudgingly worship or serve but the whole ethos of the New Covenant is of the heart, we delight and joy in the service and count all that this world offers as refuse (Phil. 3:8).

What makes the subject of Christian liberty so complex is precisely because we do not make up a list of obligations. Then we would be like the Pharisees with our check-lists. On the other hand we are obliged to use our discernment to the full in recognising those who are endued with the Holy Spirit. Fulfilment of the moral law, loving God with all our hearts and our neighbours as ourselves is something spiritual and extraordinary.

The old and new laws compared

The Mosaic law was that expression of the mind and will of God for his people during an important phase of their development. As has already been said, the mind and will of God for his people now is expressed by the whole Bible. If we take that as our law then we are lawkeepers in the fullest possible sense – not lawless, but 'law-full'. Yet this is not a law of 1,000 rules fulfilled externally, but a law working internally, whereby we never think in any other way but: how can I please God by living according to the Gospel, which is his law which he has inscribed on my mind and heart? This Gospel-law is spiritual. It

demands my whole heart and will. Of course the Mosaic law was spiritual too, but its outward demands were so rigorous as to be a burden (Gal. 5:1). That system has been fulfilled by Christ. It is therefore abrogated. The Mosaic system with all its priestly and ceremonial activities is of great use to us as a teaching aid to show us the ways of God. Especially does it exhibit the utter holiness and perfection of God in his justice and his demands. The Mosaic law illustrates that we can never ever satisfy its demands in an external sense.

To satisfy and please God we must not only stand in that perfect righteousness which he imputes to us externally, but must know, love and keep his whole Gospel law internally. Those saved in the Old Covenant dispensation were saved by faith in *the* Lamb to come. They showed their faith by offering sacrifices on God's altar and by obedience to that Law system given to them. Those saved kept God's law inwardly and spiritually, while at the same time they kept to the representation of their salvation in the Levitical system outwardly. We keep God's law inwardly and spiritually and show that we do so by all that we do externally. Thus we conform more and more to the image of Christ by inward disposition and by outward behaviour (Rom. 12:1,2; 2 Cor. 3:18). There must be no tension between the internal and the external. The internal inspires the external.

If I were asked to present a summary of how this relates to conversion by way of order, namely what is first, second, third, I say:

1. We believe and repent.

2. God puts Christ's righteousness upon us.
3. God writes his laws upon our hearts.
4. An order is established by which we constantly imbibe and digest God's Word, which is the means by which we are transformed to the likeness of Christ (Rom. 8:29, 12:2).

The laws of Christ are not burdensome (1 Jn. 5:3). They include submission to church order (Heb. 13:17), fellowship (loving the brotherhood), the communion table, prayers (Acts 2:42), attention to the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20), and continuing in all Scripture. Christ illustrated continuation in the Word by the way he used the words of Deuteronomy in his Wilderness Temptation. 'It is written: "Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God."' Some show an antinomian spirit (anti-Christ's law) when they say they will not join any church because no church is good enough for them. There is a sense in which a church with awkward and difficult people will be an excellent tool for sanctification. The reason is that by this means advance can be made in humility, patience and meekness. In an exacting situation much grace is required.

If there is a special law or commandment it is this, we are to love one another (Jn. 13:34,35). You break Christ's law when you deliberately neglect fellowship with other believers, or by absenting yourself from the meetings designed for public worship and for fellowship (Heb. 10:35). You fulfil Christ's law when you share the burdens of others (Gal. 6:2), and when you pray for and spur on others to love and good deeds (Heb. 10:24).

Apostles Today? Why Not?

Claims to apostleship are being made in Britain today. Arthur Wallis in an article, 'Apostles Today? Why Not?' (*Restoration* magazine) argues that there are three categories of apostleship, 1. Christ himself, 2. The twelve apostles, and 3. Paul and other apostles such as Barnabas, Silas, Adronicus and Junias (Rom. 16:7). He contends that Ephesians 4:11 is a declaration of an ongoing work of the ascended Christ, 'It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers'.

Wallis maintains that if 50 years after Pentecost Jesus commended the Ephesian church for testing and rejecting apostles because they were false (Rev. 2:2), then this shows that apostles continued until that time, this proving that there was an order of apostles different from the original twelve. Wallis' reasoning is weak for if there can be false claims today why not 50 years after Pentecost?

Terry Virgo who himself claims to be an apostle in the third category (Paul and the others) declares the necessity of apostles to keep the Church from going astray. The article has the title, 'The apostle is no optional extra' (*Restoration* magazine). This reasoning too is poor because we already have the claim to apostolic succession in the Roman papacy. The pope maintains the right to keep the Church from falling into error. Surely by now we should have learned that the Scriptures are the only means of keeping the Church from going astray.

Virgo's apostleship extends to 30 churches. How did he obtain such oversight? When 'charismatic renewal' has entered churches sufficiently he is invited to come and provide leadership. Legalistic elements are purged out or left behind, but observe that it requires apostolic authority to rebuild and restructure the churches. Virgo's own local church consists of some 500, about 80 percent of which are made up of those who have departed from old dead evangelical churches too legalistic and unwilling to conform to the new life.

A further reason for apostles deemed important by apostles Wallis and Virgo is that only apostles can be adequate for the 'end-time shaking which is upon us'. Says John Noble, another supporter of this view, 'The apostles were first to disappear as apathy and decline closed in. But now at last they are being restored to prepare for the blazing glory which is to fill the latter house.' And Robert Brow reasons, 'if the true church of Jesus Christ is to grow faster than the population explosion, we will need to produce, recognise and use Pauline apostles'.

It is worth spending a few moments to consider how shallow such reasoning is. It is not apostles who make the Church grow but Christ who empowered a whole Church and who at various times in history empowered his people again and again with great increase when there were no apostles in sight. It is not an office that makes the Church mighty but the Holy Spirit who works through the members of the Church irrespective of the clerical office that pertains at the time. We cannot produce Pauline apostles. The Lord appointed Paul who was responsible for most of the N.T. letters. That was no small contribution to the laying of the foundation referred to in Ephesians 2:20.

What about a third category, namely, Paul, Barnabas and others?

By those who claim apostleship for themselves J. B. Lightfoot is quoted as saying that, 'the word apostle is not so used as to lend any countenance to the idea that it is in any way restricted to the twelve'. If Lightfoot in the context is saying that the word apostle in the Greek is used many times in a general sense of simply meaning messenger then he is right. The Septuagint uses *apostello* and *exapostello* about 700 times. *Stello* means to make ready and *apo* means send. A delegation is sent. It usually applied to a group who were sent out on an expedition or mission. Apostle was a general term denoting anyone sent on a mission, whether Barnabas, Timothy, Silas or Titus. Typical is the case of Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:25). He was merely sent on a mission and by the usage of the

Greek term was in that sense an apostle. The N.I.V. translates *apostolon* as messenger. By no stretch of the imagination would Epaphroditus be classed as an apostle in the technical or official sense of having special apostolic authority from the person of Christ. The same applies to all the others such as Barnabas, Adronicus, Junias and Silas.

Paul was not the head of a third category of general apostles to be continued to the end of time. He was in the same unique category of apostles as Peter, James, John and the others who were personally ordained (face to face), and sent out by Christ. Paul was the last true apostle. There are no others who possess special authority and all who claim to be such are automatically false apostles. It is a temptation to claim special apostolic authority. There were cases of this in New Testament times (2 Cor. 11:13, Rev. 2:4). Edward Irving's movement claimed apostles but decided not to recognise him as one. Apostolic pentecostal denominations claim the perpetuity of the office of apostle. There is such a denomination which has its headquarters in Wales.

How do we know that Paul was the last apostle?

In 1 Corinthians 15:7 Paul clearly states that Paul was the very last one to whom the Lord appeared. To have the authority of an official apostle (not using the word in its general meaning of a mere messenger) one had to be a witness of the resurrection and be commissioned by Christ personally. That is insisted upon by Peter, see Acts 1:20-26. It was precisely because of this that Paul had extraordinary difficulty to prove his apostleship. This factor requires great emphasis — because it shows that the Christians of the New Testament were very strict indeed in confining the office of apostle to those personally appointed by Christ and witnesses of his resurrection.

This difficulty explains the protracted detail of the first two chapters of Galatians where Paul proves that the other official apostles recognised him as a genuine apostle in the same category as themselves. Luke the historian is sensitive to this problem and records Paul's call and commissioning no less than three times in

considerable detail (Acts 9:1-19, 22:1-21; 26:2-18).

An official apostle of Paul's status possessed an authority to exercise authority over all the churches, an authority which included the supervision of evangelists such as Timothy and Titus. Apart from the original twelve we do not find anyone else exercising this authority as did Paul. Nowhere do we find Barnabas or Silas or Adronicus asserting authority like Paul who made sure there could be no misunderstanding about the unique nature of his authority. For instance he writes to the Galatians like this:

'Paul, an apostle — sent not from men nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead.'

His epistles are prefixed with a reference to apostleship in a way which indicates his authority. He is not merely one sent forth but rather an apostle of Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:1, 1 Cor. 1:1, 2 Cor. 1:1, Eph. 1:1, Col. 1:1, 1 Tim. 1:1, 2 Tim. 1:1, Tit. 1:1).

The proofs of apostleship

For authority of such a high order we can rightly expect special proofs or signs. The Jewish legal institution of the *saliah* (the Aram. pass. part. of *salah*) applies here.¹ The Jews recognised the function of the representative or proxy from the old Semitic law concerning messengers. A man's agent (*saliah*) is like himself. We expect the *saliah* or the apostle to be like the one who sent him or who commissioned him. We expect something which befits the greatness or uniqueness of the LORD who sends his messenger who is given a special and unique authority. He has the imprimatur of the king upon him. We will now consider the authentication of those who were sent personally by our Lord.

An apostle attests his apostleship with signs, wonders and miracles

2 Corinthians 12:12 declares that the marks of an apostle are signs, wonders and miracles. We tend to underestimate the meaning of these acts. The word for wonder is *teras*. That means a prodigious wonder. *Dunamis* is the term used for miracle. It denotes something of a truly potent or mighty kind. *Semeion* meaning



*Russel Williams (left) and Lionel Clark
at The Carey Conference*

sign indicates a deed which is superlative. These words belong to the category of divinity. Perhaps familiarity with the narratives of the Gospels deprives us of the true wonder of the miracles wrought by our Lord himself and by him through his apostles. What is frightening is the warning given by Paul that Satan can in certain situations exercise supernatural powers to deceive by causing all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders (2 Thess. 2:9).

Miracles were for attestation. That is an outward work. The work of internal conversion and salvation to eternal life is of far greater moment. That is what our Lord meant when he said that his disciples would do greater things. In the context of what he was declaring at that time (John chapters 14-16), he was telling of the work of the Holy Spirit who would convince the world of sin, righteousness and judgment. Can you conceive of anything greater than multitudes of people being regenerated and being added to our churches? If our Lord was confining his observations to external miracles alone we would be baffled because nobody has exceeded the miracles of Jesus except Moses. God's miracles through Moses were on a national scale. But when Jesus fed 4,000 and then 5,000, and when he raised Lazarus from a four day sleep of death, and when he healed 10 lepers in a moment, and in another instant calmed a violent storm, when we consider such acts we are in dimensions which have hardly been exceeded even by Peter and Paul. There are those in the history of the Church who have been used to ingather souls on a scale unknown in Jesus' own ministry. Remember the poverty of Jesus following reported after a great miracle (John 6:66).

While it is possible to locate extraordinary instances of spiritual increase that does not form apostolic authority. Conversion is a more significant work and the results are everlasting whereas miracles eventuate in temporary healings or results which are temporary. It is essential that an apostle possess miraculous powers to prove his authority.

There was another feature of apostleship which is sometimes overlooked. Says Paul:

'For it seems to me that God has put us apostles on display at the end of the procession, like men condemned to die in the arena. We have been made a spectacle to the whole universe, to angels as well as to men. We are fools for Christ, but you are so wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are honoured, we are dishonoured! To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are in rags, we are brutally treated, we are homeless. We work hard with our own hands. When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it; when we are slandered, we answer kindly. Up to this moment we have become the scum of the earth, the refuse of the world' (1 Cor. 4:9-13).

This description speaks for itself.

Conclusion

We have no instructions now as to how to recognise or appoint official apostles and no details as to the authority of such. It is quite in order to send out elders (pastors) to evangelise and plant churches. Their authority is no more than that which applies to other elders or pastors. The mightiest preachers and labourers have all the authority they need in the Scriptures to organise newly planted churches. By appealing to the Word they are required to gain the goodwill of believers in recognising elders and establishing church government.

Paul was the last apostle (1 Cor. 15:7). We must therefore reject all further claims as misguided. We rejoice in the perfection of God's provisions for us, provisions which are quite adequate for filling the earth with a knowledge of his glory as the waters cover the sea (Hab. 2:14).

¹ *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Vol. I, pp. 126ff.

Does revelation continue today?

Paul Noble

In my article, 'Are there prophets today' (see *R.T.* no. 65) the foundation was laid for what follows. I drew attention to the fact that Vocational Prophets (of whom Elijah and Elisha, the canonical writing prophets, and Agabus and the Corinthian 'charismatic' prophets were typical examples) were, 1. appointed to their office through an objective, supernatural revelation by God, given either to the prophet himself or to another believer, 2. received from God, and delivered to his people, inerrant and authoritative revelation. The words that the prophet spoke could be directly identified with the words God spoke. 3. The prophet was required to vindicate his ministry by making clear-cut predictions about the immediate but unknowable future, whose fulfilment or failure could be recognised by the people of God. Any prophet whose predictions did not come to pass was to be rejected as a false prophet.

In this article it is my purpose to establish that there can be no prophets in the Church today, by showing that God grants us no Special Revelation today — whether errant or inerrant — other than through the Scriptures. In tackling the subject from this angle I am well aware that there are a growing number of evangelicals today who believe in non-revelational prophecy — often called 'Situational Prophecy'. This is identified as the quickening and illuminating work of the Spirit in the ministry of the teacher or preacher, who is thereby empowered to proclaim and apply the Word boldly and clearly. At the same time they deny that modern-day prophets receive revelation, and will therefore feel that this article is no refutation of their position. However it should already be clear from my pre-

vious article the existence of Situational Prophets are untenable today. They contradict at every point the biblical definition of what a prophet is. Situational prophets are, by the biblical definition, false prophets; and prophets who have so clearly and unequivocally declared themselves to be false need no further refutation here.

We will devote attention rather to the much more interesting question of whether there can be any *true* prophets in the Church today — that is, whether there is anyone today who can bring us revelation from God.¹ In other words, I am looking here at the question, 'Where can the Word of God be found today — in the Bible alone, or in both the Bible and on the lips of modern-day prophets?'

This question has been decisively answered against those who claim special inspiration by the Reformation motto 'Sola Scriptura' — the Scriptures alone. This truth about the finality of revelation is expressed in the first chapter of our Confessions (Westminster or the 1689 Confession). Although these positions were formulated in conscious opposition to the Roman Catholic doctrine of additional revelation, many of the arguments they used apply equally to modern day claims also. We will now observe that the continuation of revelation today is inconsistent with the Biblical teaching on the role of revelation in, 1. the history of redemption; and, 2. the redemptive work of Christ.

Revelation and Redemptive History

One of the dominant themes of the Bible, from first page to last, is that of

redemption. Genesis opens with an account of how man fell and thus came to need salvation from his sins. The Revelation closes with John's glorious vision of the redeemed enjoying the fullness of their salvation — gathered round the throne of the Lamb, and singing of his glory through all eternity. In between, much of the Bible is given to showing how this redemption was actually brought about in history — through the restraining of sin by the flood and the covenant with Noah; through the separation of the patriarchs, and the promises given to them; through the election, establishment, punishment and restoration of Israel, and, ultimately of course, through Christ himself. From Creation to the Apocalypse, Biblical history is the history of God's redemptive acts.

Intimately entwined with these great redemptive acts is God's special revelation. Necessarily this had to be so if the events themselves were to be understood by his people. What would the Exodus, for example, have meant to Israel (or to us!) if there had been no accompanying verbal revelation? A burning bush; ten awful plagues that suddenly smite the Egyptians right 'out-of-the-blue'; smoke on the mountain, and a voice like a trumpet. These events on their own would doubtless have evoked wonder and great fear, but no understanding of what was really happening — that the God of Abraham, the Creator of the ends of the earth, had heard their cries and remembered his promises to their fathers, and had come to make them his own cherished possession, even though they were the least of all the nations, and a proud and stiff-necked people, he had a land to give them, and would bless and multiply them, if they would keep his statutes. These things could only be communicated by verbal revelation, without which the great saving acts themselves would have been but enigmatic wonders.

Indeed, we can say much more than this. Not only was it necessary that revelation attend and explain God's saving acts, but the granting of these revelations were *themselves* significant saving acts. Enigmatic wonders are not of themselves saving events; they only fully become such when they are properly *understood*. 'Revelation thus appears' — as B. B. Warfield has rightly observed — 'as a factor in the redeeming work of God, a component part of the series of his redeeming acts, without which that series would be incomplete and so far inoperative for its main end. Thus the Scriptures represent it, not confounding revelation with the series of redemptive acts of God, but placing it among the redemptive events of God and giving it a function as a substantive element in the operations by which the merciful God saves sinful men. It is therefore made not even a mere constant accompaniment of the redemptive acts of God, giving their explanation that they may be understood. It occupies a far more independent place among them than this, and as frequently proceeds them to prepare their way as it accompanies or follows them to interpret their meaning. It is, in one word, itself a redemptive act of God and by no means the least important in the series of his redemptive acts.'²

Once it is seen that revelation is part of the redemptive work of God it becomes clear why there can be no further revelation today. Revelation is necessarily correlated to the saving acts of God — it discloses to us what God accomplished through these acts, what his purpose was, what their significance is to us today, how we can avail ourselves of their benefits and how, in the light of what God has done, we ought to live. Revelation interprets God's redemptive acts to us — it provides us with 'the wisdom that leads to salvation' (2 Tim. 3:15), so that we may fully avail our-

selves of that salvation, and it might avail for us.

Revelation cannot be separated from redemption; thus since there can be no further redemptive acts today there can be no further revelation either. Those redemptive acts that have already occurred have been fully expounded and interpreted in the Bible, through which we can therefore be 'thoroughly furnished unto every good work' (2 Tim. 3:17). There is thus no purpose for further revelation today. As Geerhardus Vos has rightly observed, 'Unless we adopt the mystical standpoint, which cuts loose the subjective from the objective, the only proper answer to this question (of whether there can be further revelations in the present dispensation) is, that new revelations can be added only, in case new objective events of a supernatural character take place, needing for their understanding a new body of interpretation supplied by God.'³ As Vos goes on to point out, 'This will actually be the case in the eschatological issue of things' — i.e., at the Second Coming. Until then, we know that there will be no further redemptive acts of God; therefore there can be no further revelations either.

The Work of Christ

We can perhaps see this necessary correlation between redemptive events and revelation somewhat more clearly if we shift the focus of our attention now from the history of redemption to the work of the Redeemer. It has been customary in Reformed theology since the time of Calvin to discuss the work of Christ in terms of the three Offices he executed, namely, those of Prophet, Priest and King.⁴ There is an excellent reason for adopting this approach: it corresponds very closely with the way in which the Bible itself teaches us about his work. Consider, for example, Deuteronomy 18:19-22. This passage is of fundamental importance in understanding the Old Testament concept of

a prophet — as a man in whose mouth God placed his own words (v. 18), who was to be tested by the people, and, who was to inerrantly predict the immediate but unknowable future, on pain of death if he was incorrect (vv. 20-22). But in verse 15 Moses looks far beyond the Old Testament prophets to the day when 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me'. In Acts 3:20-23 Peter says that Christ is that prophet. Thus we are evidently intended to understand the work of Christ in terms drawn from the Old Testament concept of the prophet, namely as one who received revelations from God and delivered them to the people in his name. And indeed, when we examine the ministry of Christ we find that this is exactly what he did. He spake of himself as a prophet (Lk. 13:33) and allowed others to so regard him (Mt. 21:11, 46; 9:19; Jn. 4:19; 9:17 etc.); moreover he claimed to do the work of the prophet: 'I did not speak on my own initiative, but the Father himself who sent me has given me commandment, what to say, and what to speak . . . therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told me' (Jn. 12:49, 50; cf. 8:26-28; 14:10, 24; 15:15 etc.). Evidently then, if we are to understand the redemptive work of Christ we must understand the Biblical concept of a prophet, for Christ himself occupied the prophetic office.

The same can be said of his priestly and kingly offices too. Several chapters of the epistle to the Hebrews are given to explaining the significance of Christ's death and intercessory work in terms of the priesthood of Melchisedek and the Levitical sacrifices; likewise he is foretold as the descendant of king David whose throne is established for ever (2 Sam. 7:16; cf. Lk. 1:32-33), who 'will reign as king and act wisely, and do justice and righteousness in the Lord' (Jer. 23:5). Certainly, Christ was a prophet, priest and king in a far more exalted sense than any merely human

occupant of these offices; nonetheless, it is with concepts drawn from the Old Testament understanding of these offices that the New Testament everywhere describes the work of Christ.

When we come to look at his work in more detail, we see that he in fact executed these three offices in two quite distinct modes — firstly in the *accomplishment* of salvation, and secondly in its *application*. That is, he acted as prophet, priest and king firstly to objectively accomplish the salvation of his people, and gain for them the benefits the Father had graciously promised; and secondly, he acted as prophet, priest and king in subjectively applying salvation to his people, bringing them into the benefits he had gained for them.

Once the dichotomy is recognised, it is usually quite straightforward to also discern the different elements in each part. For example, Christ acted as a priest to accomplish our salvation in offering himself as a perfect sacrifice for the sins of his people, fully satisfying the demands of divine justice and thus rendering the Father propitious. In the application of salvation he also acts as our priest, interceding for us at the right hand of God — pleading the efficacy of his sacrifice on our behalf (Heb. 9:24 — cf. the purpose for which the high priest entered the holy of holies on the Day of Atonement), defending us against the accusations of Satan (Rom. 8:33-34), and presenting our very imperfect worship and prayers faultless before the Father (1 Pet. 2:5). Similarly he acted as a king both to objectively accomplish our salvation — when he ‘disarmed the (demonic) rulers and authorities (and) made a public display of them, having triumphed over them’ (Col. 2:8; cf. Lk. 10:18; Jn. 12:31 etc.) — and to subjectively apply our salvation by conquering our stubborn hearts and establishing his throne there, and in ruling his people collectively as the Head of the Church.

Naturally as we are studying in this article the Biblical doctrine of revelation, it is of particular interest to us to see how Christ executed his prophetic office. Again we see the same dichotomy between the accomplishment and the application of redemption. In the first place, he acted as prophet to accomplish our redemption by objectively delivering to his people the word of God. As we saw above, revelation is not a more-or-less helpful accompaniment to the work of redemption but an essential part of it, without which the life, death and resurrection of Christ would avail us not one straw, because we would not understand the significance of these events, or how we should respond to them. Revelation is ‘a factor in the redeeming work of God, a component part of the series of his redeeming acts, without which that series would be incomplete and so far inoperative for its main end.’ (Warfield, quoted above.) It is therefore an essential part of Christ’s redemptive work to convey this revelation to us.

Christ accomplished this in several different ways. Sometimes he gave revelations directly, as when he appears in the Old Testament as an Angel of the Lord (e.g. Gen. 16; 18; 22; Nu. 22; Josh. 5; Judg. 6; 1 Kgs 19 etc.), and ultimately of course through his incarnation and earthly ministry. Often he gave revelation by less direct means however, through the revelatory work of the Holy Spirit. Such revelations must still be considered as part of his prophetic work: it was ‘the Spirit of Christ’ who worked within the Old Testament prophets to equip them for their office (1 Pet. 1:10-11); similarly, it was Christ who promised and sent the Spirit to the apostles to lead them ‘into all truth’ — not by the Spirit making new revelations on his own initiative, but by bringing to remembrance the things that Christ had taught them — ‘He shall take of mine, and shall disclose it to you’ (Jn.

14:26; 16:13-14). And again the revelatory Charismatic gifts, such as prophecy, tongue-speaking and interpretation of tongues, are directly linked with Christ by Peter, who explained the tongues on the day of Pentecost thus: 'Having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, *he* has poured forth this which you both see and hear' (Acts 2:33). All these are but different ways in which he executed his office of prophet to accomplish our salvation — that is, to objectively convey revelation from God (the Father) to his people.

But secondly, we can also briefly note that he also acts as prophet in the application of salvation. He has not merely given us an objective revelation, but in converting a sinner he acts to enable them to understand and believe that revelation — he sends the Spirit to 'convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgement'. And in a believer's life he still acts as prophet, to lead us into a deeper understanding of the Scriptures (1 Cor. 2; 2 Pet. 1:19-21).

Now it is a fundamental tenet of evangelical Christianity (although it is not often expressed in this way) that Christ no longer exercises these three offices in the first mode, to accomplish our salvation, for this he has already fully and completely done. In other words, it is one of our most basic beliefs that Christ has completed his redemptive work. He had been sent by the Father to save his people (Mat. 1:21; Jn. 1:29 etc.), and even before his death, in full consciousness that he would carry that task through to the end, he was able to pray 'I . . . have accomplished the work that thou hast given me to do' (Jn. 17:4) — including of course his revelatory work. He died with this shout of triumph, 'It is finished!' Thus he is repeatedly pictured in the New Testament as *seated* in heaven, all his

work done (e.g. Col. 3:1; Eph. 1:20; Heb. 1:3, 13; 10:12; 12:2; Rev. 4:2, 9; 5:1, 7, 13 etc.). As Spiq has observed, 'He has only to rest and be seated, the seated position being synonymous, in the Orient, with being unoccupied'.²⁵ Indeed, it is from the fact that he is seated that the writer to the Hebrews infers that his sacrificial work is finished and completed (Heb. 10:11-14) and this argument can obviously be extended to show that all his work for the accomplishment of our salvation is finished and complete. Thus believers are described as 'in him . . . made *complete*' (Col. 2:10) — there is no more that Christ has to do to objectively add to our salvation; henceforth it is only a matter of us progressively appropriating the redemptive blessings that he has earned for us — 'as you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him.'

All this poses insuperable problems for any doctrine of revelation that would allow prophets and tongue-speakers to arise today. If, as such theories claim, God is still conveying part of his revelation to us through modern-day prophets, then Christ is still executing his prophetic office in exactly the same way now as he was in the days of the Old Testament prophets. In the times of Isaiah, for example, part of God's revelation had already been permanently given in those Scriptures that then existed, but God still had further revelations to give in addition to these. Thus the 'Spirit of Christ' moved in Isaiah, and through him, new revelation was given, so that through him we have come to a fuller understanding of God. Christ was then acting as prophet to accomplish our salvation; and, if the Charismatics are right in thinking that there can still be prophets and tongue-speakers in the Church today, then Christ is still acting as prophet to accomplish our salvation even now — *he has still not finished his redemptive work!* True, his priestly work

is accomplished — he has ‘offered one sacrifice for sin for all time’ (Heb. 10:12) — and his kingly work is accomplished — he has ‘rendered powerless him that had the power of death, that is, the devil’ (Heb. 2:14). Yet in strange contradistinction the Charismatics would have us believe that he nonetheless continues his prophetic work right through to the Second Coming, isolated from his other ministries. This cannot be.

Viewed from this perspective, the Charismatic theory of revelation shows some alarming similarities to the Roman Catholic doctrine of the Mass, upon which the Council of Trent decreed the following: ‘In the divine sacrifice that is offered in the Mass, the same Christ who offered himself once in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross is present and is offered in an unbloody manner. Therefore the holy council teaches that this sacrifice is truly propitiating . . . for it is one and the same victim: he who now makes the offering through the ministry of priests and he who offered himself on the cross; the only difference is the manner of the offering’ (Session 22). The fundamental elements in the evangelical refutation of this heresy have been largely drawn from the doctrine of Christ’s priestly office: the Old Testament priestly and sacrificial system foreshadowed his priestly work, which perfectly fulfilled and therefore did away with them. It was therefore concluded that his propitiatory sacrifice — his priestly work for the accomplishment of our salvation — could not be repeated endlessly in the Mass, because it is impossible for him to add to what he has already done fully, or continue what he has already completed. When the perfect priest has fulfilled his office, he cannot yet add further sacrifices.

It is for reasons exactly parallel to this that I reject the possibility of there being prophets or tongue-speakers today. The Old Testament prophetic order pointed forward to and prepared the way for the coming prophet just as the animal sacrifices pre-

pared for the coming priest. When the perfect prophet (and priest) came and fulfilled these things, the Old Testament order was finished. Therefore his revelatory work — his prophetic work for the accomplishment of our salvation — cannot be continued now through modern day revelations, because it is impossible for him to add to what he has already done fully, or continue what he has already completed. When the perfect prophet has fulfilled his office, he cannot yet add further revelations.

Notes

¹ Bringing revelation from God is of course not a sufficient definition of a true prophet. I deliberately make no distinction here however between errant and inerrant revelation, because all that I say here would apply equally well to both.

² *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, pp. 80-81. Also reprinted in *The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield*, Vol. 1, pp. 12-13.

³ *Biblical Theology*, p. 304.

⁴ For example, see Calvin’s *Institutes*, Bk. 11, ch. 15; Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 11, pp. 455-609. Herman Bavink, *Our Reasonable Faith*, pp. 332-356 and pp. 375-385. Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, pp. 356-411.

⁵ As quoted by P. E. Hughes, *Commentary on Hebrews*, p. 400.

Mission England

The article on Mission England by Malcolm Watts which appeared in *R.T.77* has been produced in booklet form. Free copies can be obtained from the Bible League Secretary, Mrs. E. Houghton, Larkhill House, 4 Godwyn Close, Abingdon OX14 1BU at 22p per copy (postage extra).

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1 Corinthians: we have all been baptised into the one body by the Holy Spirit.

2 Corinthians: we are all filled with God Triune.

Galatians: fruitfulness is the only proof that we have the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians: all believers without exception are sealed.

Philippians: exalted theology is the answer to problems.

Colossians: all believers are complete in Christ.

1 and 2 Thessalonians: all believers are pointed back to their conversion.

The Pastoral Epistles: Paul commands hard work and even a little wine.

Hebrews: living by the truth of Christ is our power.

James: no power experience to escape affliction.

1 and 2 Peter: what are we to add to our faith?

1 John: the evidences that we have been born again.

Conclusion: we must build on the good work begun in us: we must avoid all forms of Galatianism.

3 The four great occasions: at Jerusalem, a city in Samaria, Caesarea and Ephesus

4 How are we to interpret crisis experiences?

1. In some cases the crisis experience is the conversion experience.

2. In some instances the crisis experience is a leap forward in holy living.

3. In some instances the crisis experience is unhappily no more than feelings and emotions.

4. Some crisis experiences represent recovery from backsliding.

5. The crisis of discovery.

6. The crisis of empowerment.

7. The crisis of discipleship.

8. A crisis in the realm of assurance and the experience of sealing.

9. The discovery of the beauty of God.

10. A crisis experience and special gifts of the Spirit.

5 The work of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament

6 Baptism with the Spirit, filling and revival

CRISIS experiences



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