

# REFORM- ATION TODAY'84



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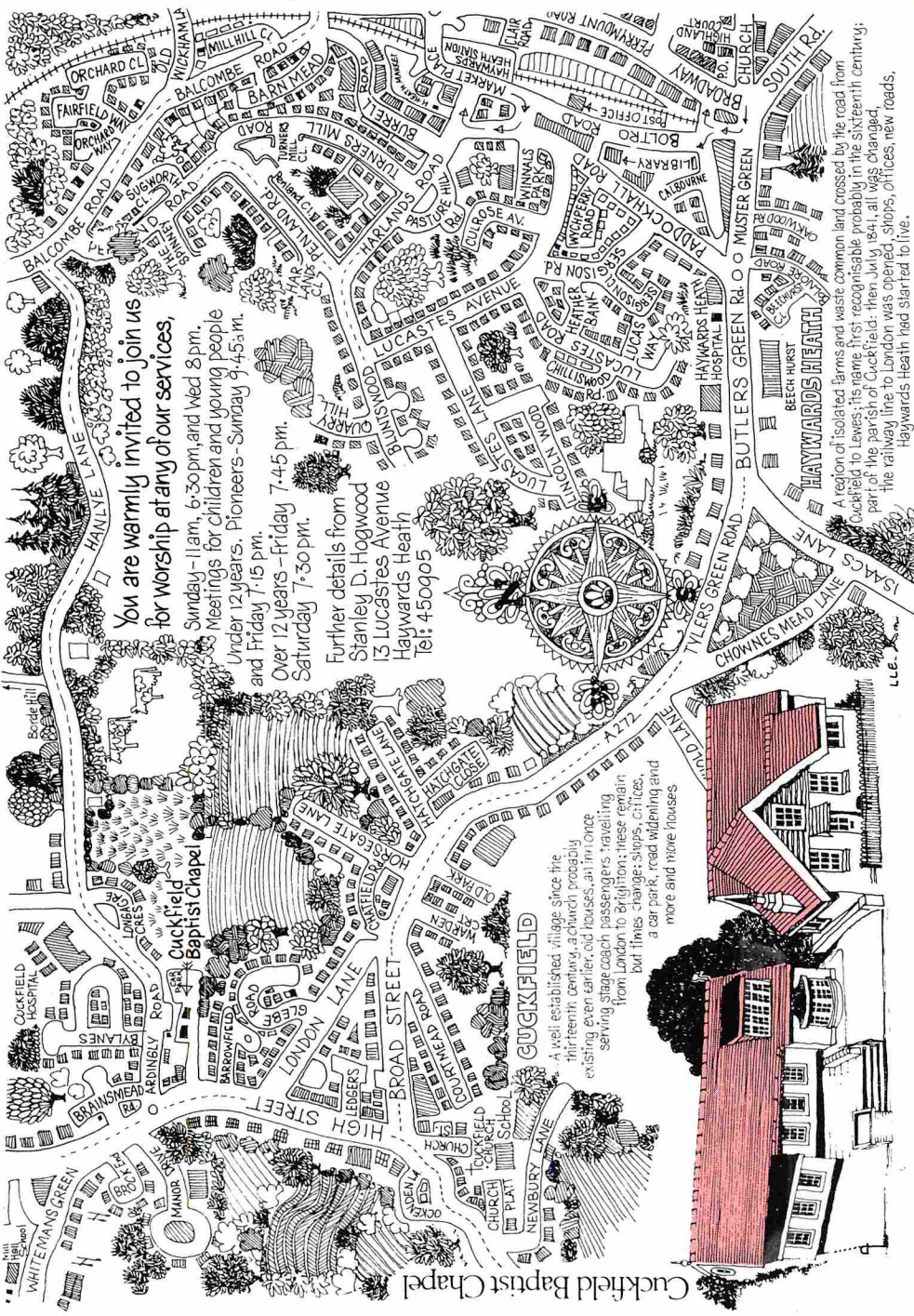
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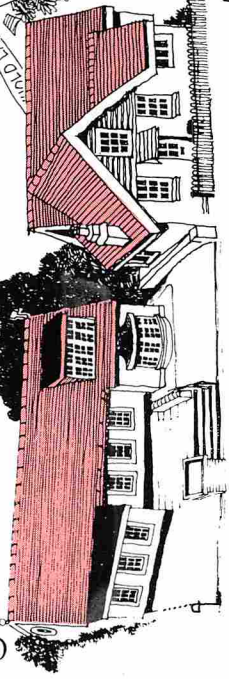


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Under 12 years. Pioneers - Sunday 9.45 a.m.  
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# CUCKFIELD

A well established village since the  
thirteenth century, a church probably  
existing even earlier, old houses, an Inn once  
serving stage coach passengers travelling  
from London to Brighton; these remain  
but times change: shops, offices,  
a car park, road widening and  
more and more houses



A region of isolated farms and waste common land crossed by the road from  
Cuckfield to Lewes; its name first recognisable probably in the sixteenth century;  
part of the parish of Cuckfield, then July 1841 all was changed.  
The railway line to London was opened, shops, offices, new roads,  
Haywards Heath had started to live.

# Editorial

The front inside covers of this issue feature the latest Cuckfield tract. It was written by Alec Taylor of Chelmsley Wood, Birmingham and readers should easily detect the hand of Lawrence Evans in the drawings. Lawrence continues to be our organiser in open air preaching which is the time when many of our tracts are distributed. If you think your area lends itself to a map similar to the one shown which you could use on your own literature, then please write to our accountant, Bob Campen (Box 106 etc. see back cover) who will help you with regard to your requirements. Lawrence says he is an artist and does not write letters! Happy man! Each man his trade will ply!

## Liverpool

After more than 22 years as pastor of Cuckfield the editor has accepted a call to Belvidere Road situated strategically in the centre of the city of Liverpool which has the reputation of being Britain's most run down city. Stuart Olyott, who was pastor at Belvidere Road until 18 months ago, pastored the church there for 14 years.

The work of the magazine should continue as it is now except for a change of address which should be described about September time when the move takes effect. There is an excellent unity in the church at Cuckfield and tremendous goodwill in seeing the needs of other areas where there is a minimum of Reformed preaching. It is my desire to approach this challenge 'low-key' praying for adequate resources and resting heavily on the spiritual support of like-minded churches in the North of England, Ireland (see photos in this issue) and especially Cuckfield, the sending church.

Our close friend, Keith Davies, after 13 years of pastoral service in Tuckingmill, Cornwall, a rural area similar to that of mid-Sussex, last year moved to St. John's Wood Road Baptist Church, London.<sup>1</sup> He has just written to some of his friends about the inner city scene. Since his sentiments at this juncture so exactly describe my own I quote his letter.

'Being very close to the West End of London and very densely populated, St. John's Wood is in every sense "inner city". The range of ethnic backgrounds bring a pluralism to our society, the main feature of which is a widespread spiritual indifference broken occasionally by Godless and deceitful religion. The work of Satan is all too evident in the resulting moral and social chaos.

Despite all this we are happy to be here — "the boundary lines *have* fallen to us in pleasant places" and we thank God for his providence. The dark backcloth serves to highlight the brightness of Christ's jewels. By his grace we can shine like stars in our crooked and depraved generation.

Over recent years we have witnessed a remarkable activity by God amongst Reformed Baptist Churches here in London. There has been a steady influx of young people whose understanding and love for the doctrines of grace is heartwarming. There has been a steadily growing desire to see God's blessing poured out in the salvation of many souls. There has been an equipping of the Churches with Pastors — more now than at any time in living memory — whose sound biblical exposition is now the rule rather than the exception. There are now possibilities for the establishing of Churches in hitherto 'no-go' areas, Soho being just a beginning (as a Church we stand firmly with, in and behind the London In-reach Project and we commend it to you).

But, whilst we stand *on* the brink, we want to be *in* the blessing.

<sup>1</sup> Pastor Keith Davies' address is 39 St. John's Wood Road, London NW8 8QX. His telephone no: 01-286 3875.

Front cover — The photos in this issue were taken at the annual pastors' conference of the Baptist Union for Ireland. From left to right: Dr. Drew Holmes who is acting secretary of the Youth Department, Dr. David McMillan, Newry Baptist Church, County Down, and Pastor John Birnie, Sion Mills Baptist Church, County Tyrone.



**Belvidere Road Church, Liverpool**

And this is where we seek your help. Will you pray these possibilities into realities? Will you pray for the establishing of churches which will be used of God for the massive extension of his kingdom? Will you pray for the saving of *thousands* from sin and death and hell? Will you ransack your Bible for the promises of God and then plead them before his throne on behalf of London? Will you consider prayerfully if you have resources able to help us — we mean people — people to work and people to pioneer in new areas, especially to lead in church planting endeavours.

The worldly mass campaigns have manifestly failed. Now we ask you to pray for the churches whose work it is to carry the gospel to the millions. Pray that Christians across the country will take up the challenge in their praying, in their coming to join in the work. Pray that God will rend the heavens and come down upon the churches and upon the world here in London.'

Nothing like the improvement and increase in the kind of ministry described by Keith Davies pertains in Liverpool, Birkenhead and neighbouring Manchester. From that point of view the situation in most of those parts, according to those who know it first hand, is barren. What is one family? Very little, but we are taught by Zechariah not to despise little things attempted for God (Zech. 4:10). We must have a realistic view of our own insignificance and weakness but at the same time pray that our weakness will be fertile ground for God's omnipotence.

#### **Tertullian and his turning to Montanism**

There is a close parallel today between a small number of our leaders and Tertullian. When we read the account by Bill Payne we will more readily understand why this is so. The inadequacy lies not in Biblical truth. It may lie within ourselves when we do not exemplify the vitality that we should. On the other hand it may lie in the inability of those who espouse the modern Montanist movement who fail to appreciate that the miracles of Jesus and his apostles are utterly unique. What we find incredible is that they go in that way even in the absence of the prodigious miracles that attested the New Testament testimony. For all the shortcomings of many within the Reformed movement it does not seem to be declining, that is if attendances at the Carey and Leicester conferences are anything to go by. Absenteeism at the Carey Conference for Montanist reasons was significant but minimal. Also when it comes to expository literature it is very encouraging to observe much that is of high quality from writers who love the doctrines of grace. However when we lift up our eyes and see the colossal work of evangelism and missionary outreach to be done there is no room for complacency.

*David R. Jackson is the minister of the Nepean Baptist Reformed Church, Australia. We welcome this excellent exposition by him.*

# Abraham's Assurance and Ours

A great deal has been written and preached about assurance of salvation. For some of the early Puritan pastors it was the most important pastoral problem which confronted them.

For any sensitive soul who has for any time sought salvation on the basis of developing personal merit in good works, there is always the fear: will I ever be good enough to be accepted by God?

For the Roman Catholic the problem is a noose binding the devotion of men to the cult of priests, laws and 'sacraments'. By the sacraments of the Church of Rome they say one receives the grace by which one may be saved. A Roman Catholic cartoonist in America once portrayed the church as a large soft-drink dispenser. The poor sinner approaches as one dying of thirst. Into the slot he drops his coin and then places his empty cup under one of seven spouts, each one representing a sacrament. To this machine he must resort constantly or die.

This would not be a big problem but for the one persistent or nagging question. The grace in the sacrament cannot be received without a proper faith and piety in the sinner who comes. So the sensitive soul reflects, 'How shall I, a sinner, obtain such faith and piety?' Answer: 'By the grace of God'. Question: 'How shall I obtain this grace?' Answer: 'In the sacraments'!

The Reformation discovery of justification by faith broke much of this circle of despair, but for many the problem was simply transferred. How can I be saved? I must have faith. How can I get that faith? I am a liar by nature. When I go to Christ in prayer professing faith and repentance, am I sincere or still lying? On judgement day, will he not say to me, as to other false 'believers', 'I never knew you'? How can I know I am saved?

Thus I wrestled for three years after my conversion. I discovered some years later that John Bunyan wrestled for some five years after his. In his autobiography, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, he wrote:

Now was I as one bound, I felt myself shut up unto the judgement to come: nothing now for two years together would abide with me, but damnation, and an expectation of damnation.

He read of the 'unpardonable sin' (Mark 3:24) and of so many traps and snares of Satan and of the deceits of his own heart that made the possibility of his persevering in faith and conquering to the end seem utterly hopeless. One moment he professed faith and repentance and yet, then, in the course of a few hours, would realise that he had again sinned and faithlessly turned away. Was his repentance and faith credible if he then so quickly forsook Christ?

The patriarch Abraham was not immune from such a struggle, but in his struggle, God reveals to us the answer in Christ most plainly.

God has called Abram and taken him from Ur to Canaan through many trials and dangers. In Genesis 15 the Lord comforts Abram with the words:

Do not fear, Abram,  
I am a shield to you;  
Your reward shall be very great (v. 1)

To this Abram inquires concerning the promised reward. What use would such a reward be to one who was childless — the reward would pass immediately to Eliezer of Damascus.

The Lord then speaks to Abram of the one who shall be born 'from your own body' through whom Abram's descendants would come in number like the stars in the heavens. At this point we read those marvellous words (v. 6): 'Then he believed in the LORD, and he reckoned it to him as righteousness'. Abram was justified (declared righteous before God) by faith.

The Lord then repeats his promise of the land to Abram. Still, Abram is in need of assurance. A believer — yes! Justified by faith — yes! But in need of assurance. Why? Abram asks, 'O Lord GOD, how may I know that I shall possess it?' (v. 8).

Abram is not questioning God's faithfulness, but his own. Surely, Abram knows, if he is faithful to the Lord, God will give him what he has promised. Yet, if Abram should turn away, God would be just to withhold the blessing. Thus it happened to the generation of the descendants who, for want of faith, perished in the wilderness and did not inherit the promised land (cf. Heb. 3:12-4:13). Abram seeks assurance, in effect, that God will *keep* him in that state of righteousness and not let him fall away.

To this the Lord answers in a form easily understood by Abram and Moses (the writer of Genesis) but, alas, not so well known by us today because of our neglect of the study of the Old Testament.

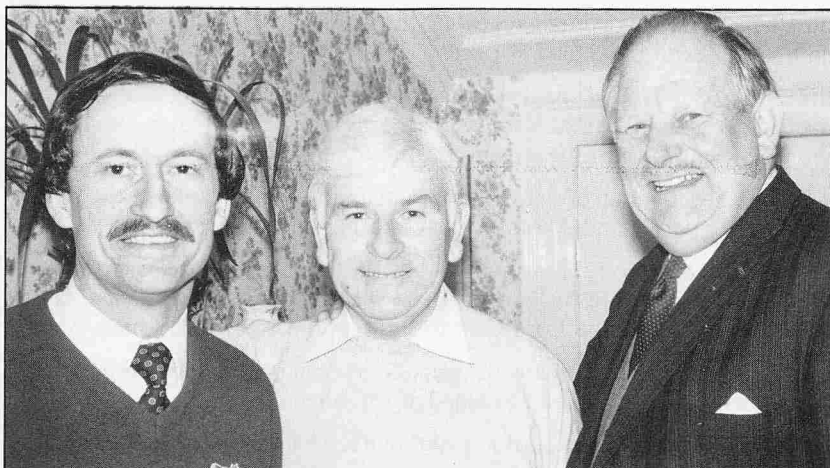
In verses 9-17, Moses describes God's answer by which Abram was reassured of the certainty of God's grace to him, and of his perseverance in that grace. In verse 18 we read, 'On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram'.

What then is a covenant, and how does this covenant give any assurance of salvation to Abraham and us today?

A covenant is, essentially, a legal contract. In the form here described it is a legal arrangement used by an emperor or 'great king' in settling affairs with a vassal king. The procedure was simple.

A great king or emperor would enter into a legal treaty with lesser kings, thus establishing his empire, whether by force of arms, or at the request of a weaker ruler seeking the protection and favour of his more powerful neighbour.





*Pastor Rick Markham, Letterkenny Baptist Church, Republic of Ireland, Pastor Jim Henry who is an evangelist with Baptist Missions, and Pastor Norman Porter (Pastor-elect), Killicomaine Baptist Church, Portadown, Co. Armagh*

The two kings then would meet together and a document would be drawn up. This would recount the history of their relations up to this point of time and set forth the reasons for which this covenant was now being made.

There would follow a series of promises. The emperor, for his part, might promise military protection, economic and trade concessions, etc. The vassal would usually promise loyalty, payment of taxes or tribute and support against the emperor's enemies.

There would then follow a list of blessings for faithfulness to these promises and curses for any disloyalty or faithlessness.

The ultimate covenant curse was what we might call 'the feast of covenantal judgement'. Should the vassal rebel and break the promises (oaths) made in the covenant, the emperor shall come and destroy that kingdom — its cities and farms. Every man, woman and child would be put to death and left in the open field, unburied, for the birds of prey to feast upon.

The five books of Moses constitute the covenant document of God's covenant with Israel made at Mt. Sinai. In Deuteronomy we read (ch. 28) of the blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience, the ultimate curse being (v. 26): '... your carcasses shall be food to all birds of the sky and to the beasts of the earth and there shall be no one to frighten them away' (cf. also Jer. 7:33; 16:4; 19:7; 34:20).

Having written the covenant agreement, the ceremony would take place. A number of beasts would be killed and their carcasses cut in half, nose to tail. The pieces would then be laid out on the ground, each half opposite the other forming an awful avenue of slaughter.

The two kings, in the presence of their respective peoples, would walk between the pieces along this avenue, repeating the words for all to hear, 'Thus let it be done to me, and more also, if I break any of the words of this covenant'.

In Genesis 15:9-17, God makes a covenant with Abram. Abram, in obedience to the Lord's directions, gathers the animals, kills them, cuts them in two, and lays the pieces out to form the avenue for the covenant ceremony.

As soon as the avenue of slaughtered animals and birds is laid out, the birds of prey appear (v. 11) and Abram is busy chasing them off.

We would expect God and Abram to walk together between the pieces and take the oath, each to fulfil his part of the covenant: Abram to obey God as his covenant Lord, and the Lord God to fulfil all his promises to bless Abram.

But no! Abram is overcome with sleep. God appears veiled in darkness, as he did again when he appeared to Israel at Mt. Sinai (Ex. 19).

Out of the darkness God speaks to Abram declaring his promise again, adding more detail of Abram's personal peace (v. 15) with God until death and of the future of his descendants in Egypt and the Exodus.

Then (v. 17), the oath is taken, but who is it who passes between the pieces of the slaughtered animals and birds? Abram is not there. There are two visible forms that pass between the pieces, who must represent each of the two parties to the covenant. We know from other occasions when God appears that men see only smoke and fire — his glory being veiled from their eyes lest they perish. The flaming torch fits this pattern but then so does the 'smoking oven'! One must represent Abram. What then do we make of this covenant ceremony?

From Abram's perspective it would at least be clear that, should he sin and bring the covenant curses upon himself, he will not suffer them personally. He will die 'in peace'. Someone, appearing as a 'smoking oven' has taken his place in the covenant ceremony, undertaking to receive the curse himself should Abram sin. There can be little doubt who this One is: it is Christ.

Abraham thus has full assurance. It is his sin that holds the threat to his receiving the covenant blessings of God. That threat is now removed for God himself has undertaken to take Abram's place and pay the penalty of death for his sin.

Both the oven and the torch are visible appearances of God — theophanies. Here is the Father and the Son making a covenant to bless those who are Christ's people and to save them from sin and death.

This salvation belongs to all who are here represented by Christ — all his elect people.

Thus, in each generation, when the curses of the covenant fell upon the physical descendants of Abraham, there was a remnant chosen by God's sovereign grace, who were, by virtue of Christ's substitution in their place, saved! (cf. Deut. 30).



Jeremiah, in chapter 16:1-13, speaks of the people's sin as breaking the covenant and entering into covenants with other gods. For this unfaithfulness the curses are about to be enforced upon Judah. Yet he immediately speaks of the restoration of God's elect remnant:

'I will restore them to their own land which I gave to their fathers. Behold I am going to send for many fisherman declares the LORD, and they will fish for them . . . and they will hunt them from every mountain and every hill, and from the clefts of the rocks' (vv. 15-16).

Likewise Ezekiel describes the Lord's grace to Israel in the form of the covenant of marriage, broken by spiritual adultery, and punished by death. Yet he then proceeds to recount God's faithfulness to his covenant with Abraham (16:60-63).

'Nevertheless, I will remember my covenant with you in the days of your youth and I will establish an everlasting covenant with you . . . and you shall know that I am the LORD, in order that you may remember and be ashamed, and never open your mouth any more because of your humiliation, when I have forgiven you for all that you have done, the Lord GOD declares.'

So, in due time, Christ came, took flesh, and in an open field outside the city, died in the place of his people. In him I have received fully the wrath of God for all my sin. When I consider Jesus and his faithfulness to his covenant promise to Abraham I am assured that I shall inherit all the blessings of his grace. He is the substitute and representative for Abraham and for all who are, by faith, Abraham's offspring.

When I examine myself, all is trouble, doubt, humiliation and fear. So I look again to Christ and abandon myself to him. If he will not represent me I am lost. But, if I come to him, he has sworn not to cast me out (John 6:37). My faith is in Christ to save me eternally. My assurance is then to be found not in myself, but in him. He is my faithful covenant Lord. He is also my faithful covenant Head, representative and substitute.

As the Old Testament prophets so often would declare by oath: 'As surely as the LORD lives', Christ has paid it all and we are assured that nothing 'shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord' (cf. Rom. 8:37-39).

## **CAREY FAMILY CONFERENCE**

**Leeds Polytechnic, Beckett Park, Leeds  
Monday, July 30th to Saturday, August 4th**

**Subjects:** The centrality of the Church in the work of the Gospel. Church membership – its responsibilities and discipline. The unity of Reformed churches nationally and internationally. The use of leisure time. The problem of unemployment. Further details may be announced.

**Speakers:** Alun McNabb, Erroll Hulse, Peter Parkinson, Malcolm McGregor

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*This article was made possible by a number of ministers responding to a questionnaire, mostly at the Banner of Truth Conference at Leicester, but also through correspondence and by personal conversations. Preachers or hearers are invited to respond to the questionnaire which hopefully will lead to a further article.*

## **Systematic Expository Preaching**

A tremendous impact can be made upon the lives of those who take the trouble to listen retentively to a series of expositions on any given section of Scripture. In our times Dr. Lloyd-Jones set the pace. I remember best his series on Genesis 3, Ezekiel 36 and those parts of Ephesians which it was possible to regularly attend. Few preachers have the ability to preach in such detail and few can sustain the enthusiasm of their hearers for thirteen years on a book like Romans.

Preaching in great detail on the words and phrases of the Biblical text is not the only method of systematic expository preaching. Don Carson provides us with an example of the very opposite style. He was invited to a church where a number were attending for the first time. Their knowledge of the Scriptures was almost nil. They needed to be introduced to the Bible for they hardly knew what it was. Our brother who teaches at the Trinity Evangelical School, Deerfield, Illinois, elected to present the Bible in 7 sessions like this:

1. The God who does not wipe out rebels (creation and fall).
2. The God who writes his own agreements (the Abrahamic covenant).
3. The God who legislates (Moses and law).
4. The God who goes after rebels (kingdom and prophets).
5. The God who becomes a man (incarnation).
6. The God who loves (Jn. 3:16 — mission and purpose of the church).
7. The God who is very angry (second advent, heaven and hell).

What an excellent idea! Once you grasp it you can expand it and arrange or multiply the titles to suit any situation.

Graham Stevens of Three Bridges Free Church in Sussex preached 35 sermons on the Sermon on the Mount, 20 on 1 Thessalonians and 10 on Defending the Faith (Apologetics). He also preached 28 sermons on Philippians which he deems to have been the most profitable, together with 10 on Jonah. Some, he says, find that he is 'too long' but most ministers find there are some in their congregations who will always make that complaint. Occasionally there is the bonus of people who say that the preaching, even though it has gone on for 45 minutes, is too short! Brother Stevens declares that of all expository preaching the systematic kind cannot be bettered since our task is to declare the whole counsel of God. How else, he asks, can we faithfully discharge our duty?

When he responded to the questionnaire Dr. Richard Davies of Tollington Park Baptist Church, London, was getting well over the 100 mark with his series on

## QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PREACHERS

### *Systematic expository preaching*

What series of expositions are you at present engaged in — either books of Scripture or subjects?

Book or subject

Approx. number of  
expositions in series.

Sunday mornings

Sunday evenings

Midweek

Any other occasion?

What series do you believe has been the most profitable?  
If there are several please state them.

What mistakes have you made? — too long? — inflexibility? — too brief?  
Please feel free to comment.

Please add any comments that you think will be of help to others. If you  
are a disciple of C. H. Spurgeon and do not follow the series method  
please express why.

Name ..... Church .....

## QUESTIONNAIRE FOR HEARERS

### *Systematic expository preaching*

What series of expositions have you found most beneficial? Can you  
provide some reasons why?

What are your criticisms of the weak points in this method?

What suggestions have you to make for the improvement of this  
method?

What book or theme would you most like to be the subject of this  
method?

Philippians and over 60 on Luke. He testifies that the series in Luke has been instrumental in the conversion of some 15 people.

Gilbert Evans of Flint Evangelical Church has taken subjects as the basis for systematic preaching. For instance, over 17 sermons on, 'The Believer who Sins', and 10 sermons on the Prodigal Son with a further series on, 'The Twentieth Century Christian' in which there has been an application of Scriptural principles to modern life in all its aspects. Our brother Evans regards the best series that he has taken to be, 1. The Fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5), 2. Temptation, 3. Training of Disciples, 4. The Care for the Believer who sins, 5. The Man Moses, 6. The book of Job.

In commenting, he declares of his 25 years of experience that he has sometimes put too much material in one sermon or been too concentrated in his flow of reasoning. Latterly he has made his material go much further by extrapolating into more detail and application. He is aware of the danger of becoming too thin in content. Also he has felt more freedom in being extempore but hastens to add that that requires careful preparation.

John J. Murray of Oban Free Church, Scotland says that the best series he has taken is on the Gospel of Mark. He has been going through Ephesians at the pace of about 10 sermons per chapter for his midweek meetings. J.J.M. says that he finds it very difficult to preach without having a series and thinks the Spurgeon method of constantly preaching on different topics has done a lot of damage in Scotland. Concerning questions about mistakes that have been made, he thinks that there is a tendency not to prepare enough at the beginning for a series. This is probably true for all ministers who are so constantly pressed by commitments that they lack the time to do a thorough overall preparatory study before they begin a series. If there are church officers reading this they might remember that their teaching elder could well do with more help in order that he can be free to be more thoroughly equipped for the ministry. This is a better policy than over-driving the ox in treading out the grain (1 Tim. 5:18). The result will be a decline in the quality of his work. Sometimes it helps to break a series and do a shorter series by way of interlude. J.J.M. did this with regard to the Gospel of Mark, having a break halfway to expound the Ten Commandments.

Pastor Stuart Latimer of the People's Bible Church, South Carolina reports that the most profitable series that he has taken are, 1. The Christian in Complete Armour (Eph. 6:10-20), 2. 1 Corinthians 13, 3. The Life of Elisha, 4. Genesis 1-17, 5. Psalm 23, 6. The Ten Commandments in their Twentieth Century Application.

Pastor Latimer maintains that the systematic method helps to keep the pastor balanced in his life and preaching. He also says that it forces the preacher to deal with things he might otherwise skip over and avoid. Furthermore, he claims that the systematic method gives a well-balanced meal to the sheep of all spiritual ages and in addition keeps the pastor studying new material, enabling him to



preach on needed and perhaps controversial matters without seeming to pick on people as though he was being vindictive. For instance, if there are those who are forsaking the assembling of themselves together and that comes up in the course of expounding Hebrews 10, then those who are guilty are not able to say that they are being specially preached at!

Brother Latimer believes that the systematic method approaches Scripture in the way God had been pleased to reveal himself, that is with a wholeness and a context to it. Thoughtfully, the minister of the People's Bible Church answers those who claim that this method leaves no room for leadership from the Holy Spirit. He replies that the Holy Spirit does lead months ahead. Also if there is a peculiar or special prompting then we need not be bound by the series. The point about provision months ahead is one that brings glory to the Holy Spirit because the Holy Spirit alone is able to foresee all the forthcoming needs in all their detail months and even years ahead. This we could never do. Many ministers have testified to the way in which series constantly meet the peculiar needs of the hour which they could never have foreseen a year or two before.

Dr. Tom Nettles, who is due soon to spend a year in Britain, is Professor of Church History at Mid-America Baptist Seminary. He has also agreed to take a day at the Whitefield Fraternal here in Sussex. He was invited by Pastor Stuart Latimer to preach at the People's Bible Church in Greenville in 1983. The messages which he chose had an unusual systematic flavour as follows:

1. The Man Peter (1 Peter 1:1)
2. Peter's Doctrine of Election (1 Peter 1:1-2)
3. Peter's Doctrine of Scripture (1, 2 Peter)
4. Exposition of 2 Peter 1:1-4
5. Exposition of 2 Peter
6. The Cross as Peter sees it (Acts 2:22-24, 32, 36; 3:12-16)

The link very obviously is the man Peter. How helpful it is to use him as an aid to the memory to retain much valuable material. It is a good thing that ministers are happy that others might freely use inspiration that they have received. It is helpful, however, when a minister acknowledges the source of his material. Many of us have read of that occasion when Spurgeon went incognito to a meeting and was astonished to hear one of his sermons preached in its entirety! It might well be disconcerting if one of us preached a sermon in its entirety which had just been published by the Banner of Truth or some other publishing house and several in the congregation had read it the same week! It only takes moments to say where an idea has its origin.

Stephen Dray of Zion Chapel, New Cross, London SE14, says that the most profitable series he has taken is one of about 35 sermons on the book of Revelation. He made the series deliberately practical. It was warmly received. His second choice is one on Bible Survey and third, a series showing the harmony of the Old Testament and the New Testament.

Stephen confesses that he has perhaps been unwilling at times to break into a series and also that he may have made the mistake of being too theological. He intimates that we should be sensitive to when a series really goes 'dry'.

Alun McNabb of Dudley in the West Midlands has used Jeremiah as a basis for evangelistic sermons. This reminds us that all Scripture lends itself to evangelistic preaching. An unusual series embarked upon by Pastor McNabb was 'Doctrinal Lessons from History'!

Brother McNabb believes that the most profitable series that he has taken was 12 evangelistic addresses based on Ecclesiastes but also he experienced great joy in preaching 16 sermons which outlined the book of Revelation. All the parables, he says, are very rewarding although he warns that much discipline is required to expound them correctly. He has followed Burrowes in the Song of Solomon in about 20 sermons with an emphasis on devotion.

The minister of the Bedford Evangelical Church, Colin Richards, recommends that his congregation should read the Bible through in a period of three years. He draws attention to the fact that we must be careful to be free to adapt our expositions to the unexpected visitors who come in and be free not to be bound by our preparatory studies. He warns against becoming wearisome in consecutive exposition and is not too hard on Spurgeon when he suggests that occasionally that approach may have its value.

**It may well be that failure to use the catechetical method means that a great deal of material is lost through a low rate of concentration and a poor realisation of the spiritual and mental resources of our congregations.**

J. A. Baker from Jireh Chapel, Wigan thinks that there is a danger in going too fast and seeking to cover too much. Only the very best preachers, he maintains, can avoid being superficial. He believes that speed has to be carefully considered especially as it pertains to the nature of the church. Obviously there are some churches which are not accustomed to systematic preaching and would find 'heavy' preaching beyond their capacity of endurance! An editorial remark at this point might interest readers. When I first began in the ministry I remember taking a text in Genesis 3 and announcing that text for an exposition five times in a row on five consecutive Sunday mornings. The surprise increased as we went on! The objective was to show that the Scriptures are capable of providing almost endless streams of living water, that is if we are prepared to work at it! The whole Biblical doctrine of the nature of man and the fourfold state can be gathered to serve a text. This one (Gen. 3:8) concerned Adam and Eve hiding behind the trees of the garden. Allegorising those trees allows for a lot of colour and illustration as well as relevance because the bushes and trees of

today require description. But to return to the comments made by Mr. Baker, he tells us that Isaiah has furnished a sermon for about each chapter and has been a blessing. There have been several conversions. A series on 1 Timothy has led to a discussion about the question of eldership. This proved controversial but also beneficial. He has found that Ephesians has provided not only good doctrinal but also substantial ethical substance as well. By preaching Isaiah, Ephesians and 1 Timothy at the Sunday morning, Sunday evening and midweek occasions he has a good balance, although to be ideal an Old Testament book with a Gospel and then an epistle would seem to be most balanced.

Some ministers use the method of revision at the midweek meeting at which they catechise the congregation in order to draw out the points that were used in the sermons on Sunday. Rather than run three series concurrently some prefer to run an Old Testament series together with a New Testament series and then develop the one further at the midweek meeting. It may well be that failure to use the catechetical method means that a great deal of material is lost through a low rate of concentration and a poor realisation of the spiritual and mental resources of our congregations.

Victor Budgen of Milnrow Evangelical Church draws attention to the fundamental nature of the various passages of Scripture. Isaiah or Judges usually provide a sermon per chapter whereas the Gospels need to be taken paragraph by paragraph. Since he raised the subject, we might go on to say that the first epistle of John likewise needs to be handled section by section because it is so easy to become bogged down by the circular reasoning employed by that apostle which is so different to the straight line reasoning of the apostle Paul. Also some parts of Isaiah, like the 53rd, 54th, or 55th chapters, lend themselves to a series of eight to ten sermons each, if not more.

David Harman of Warboys has taken a series with the title, 'Some Problems in Prayer'. He has found that series on Ezra and Judges 1-7 have been fruitful as reported by others. He has also found evangelistic sermons (13 in all) from Ecclesiastes to be challenging and edifying. Concerning the possibility of mistakes he admits that in Hebrews he has tended to get bogged down which reminds us that in preaching through Hebrews there are places where one needs to have one's foot on the accelerator! This is in no wise to disparage the substance but it is essential to keep subjects like the priesthood in perspective so that we do not lose our perspective view of the forest because we have our eyes so intently fixed upon one tree!

Brother Harman reminds us to use our common sense concerning the nature of midweek attendances when parents alternate in coming. A good deal of repetition or recapping is needed for the sake of some and this needs to be done with spice and variety so as to avoid trying the patience of those who have attended all the expositions.

Irfon Hughes, who is shortly to settle in America after an extended pastorate at Wycliffe Chapel, Sheffield, says that the most profitable series he has taken is on

the book of Hebrews followed by 'The Christian in Church, Home and Work' (Eph. 5:21-6:9), followed by Ruth, followed by Revelation. He reminds us that we must never forget to think of the children. During the Falklands War he captured the imagination of the young ones through the use of 'The Christian in Complete Armour'. He warns too against inflexibility and believes that we should be very free in the way we break up our materials and not be legalistic in sticking to a verse by verse method. His most extended series seems to be that on the Psalms, 150 in all, one exposition per Psalm. That provokes all kinds of questions in our minds when we think of the length of Psalm 119 compared with the Psalms of ascent but if Irfon writes to us from America with helpful suggestions we will welcome that!

**If there are church officers reading this they might remember that their teaching elder could well do with more help in order that he can be free to be more thoroughly equipped for the ministry. This is a better policy than over-driving the ox in treading out the grain (1 Tim. 5:18). The result will be a decline in the quality of his work.**

Rev. H. van Keen of the Netherlands, like many of his fellow ministers, sometimes preaches a series of sermons on the Heidelberg Catechism. He believes that the best series that he has taken are on the epistle of James and on the eight visions in Zechariah (ten sermons). He stresses the importance of always keeping to the context in which the texts are found and ever holding before the people the major lines or directions of a book or passage. He more or less intimates that it is not sinful to miss out sections if they are not immediately relevant, especially when there are sections which are crying out to us because they are so relevant.

Finally, Howard Mason, minister of Park Evangelical Church, Stoke-on-Trent, reminds us that it is important to listen to our people enough to hear where their hearts are. Also he says we must not neglect to warn about moral dangers like adultery and materialism. We ought also to keep down to earth and in answering the question, which series he believes to have been the most profitable, he replies, 1. The miracles of Christ in John's gospel, 2. A short, sharp series on doctrinal subjects including election, 3. An exposition of Colossians 3 on Marriage and the Family. At the time of answering the questionnaire he was well into 2 Corinthians (18 sermons) and also the Resurrection of Christ and its implications (9 sermons) and at the same time, Christ in the 5 books of Moses (25 sermons).

This article is concluded with apologies to those who filled in a questionnaire and who have not been included because their findings have been similar to those already expressed.



# Daily Bible Reading Notes

## Four Weeks with Romans

32 pages 60p. 1984. Bible Today Ltd., 6 Pembroke Road, Moor Park, Northwood, Middx. HA6 2HR.

### Listening to God Library

The first year's programme is as follows: Eight weeks with Luke; four weeks with Romans; four weeks with Mark; eight weeks with John; eight weeks with Acts; four weeks with Ephesians; four weeks with Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon; four weeks with Galatians; four weeks with the Letters of Peter and John; four week special on Discipleship.

We will look at 3 of these and firstly, take up the 32 page booklet on Romans measuring 12cm x 19cm. Immediately striking is the attractiveness of the production, layout and colour pictures. The general standard is on a par with the best colour productions emanating from Lion Press. Bible reading notes do not suit everyone and as your reviewer I must confess that I have never had success with that method and have never been attracted to any Bible reading notes. This probably applies to many preachers who are forever foraging in Bible commentaries. However, I must say that I really enjoyed these notes, having read them at my own pace. Midweek and weekend topics devoted to an explanation of the main themes and terms in Romans add considerable interest and value to the notes. Brief anecdotes or stories appear with the commentary sections throughout. When I began I doubted the value of the anecdotes but in due course began to appreciate them and believe that they will be especially helpful to those unused to serious Bible reading. Indeed they may well sustain the interest of the uncommitted who we might persuade to read the Bible with the help of these notes. Of further additional interest and substantial worth are cameos on France, West and East Germany, and Switzerland.

One could hardly conceive of a better way to encourage relatives and friends to read the Bible for themselves than by giving them a set of these notes, together with a contemporary translation like the N.I.V. I am determined to do this and urge readers to do likewise. The contributions are written by a

variety of well known conservative ministers who are experienced in rightly dividing the Word of Truth.

## Eight Weeks with John

64 pages. 75p. 1984. Bible Today Ltd (address as before).

This booklet is along the same lines as the aforementioned notes on Romans. The cameos describe and illustrate South American countries. The following anecdote is typical of the illustrations which are neatly demarcated from the rest of the print for each day:

'You show no interest in your studies; you are a thoroughly bad influence on the other boys,' said the headmaster to the 15-year-old boy before expelling him. It didn't matter — he had another school to go to, if he passed an exam ... but he didn't! At last he found a third school where he finished his studies.

'Bright but lazy,' was everybody's verdict. No one — apart from himself — was surprised when he didn't get a teaching post. Soon he found a job in a boarding school — and was promptly sacked!

'A layabout.' 'Stupid.' 'A failure.' He was known as all these. But he went on to become a university professor and a great mathematician and physicist. His name? — Albert Einstein.

Most anecdotes or illustrations falter or fail when the solemn theme of Jesus' passion is in view, and it would have perhaps been better if the editor (following his own admirable flexibility) had omitted one or two of them at that juncture. This criticism is mild and should not detract in any way from the overall excellence of the work as a whole. The standard maintained in dividing passages and commenting briefly upon them is first rate. Again a variety of authors, reputable for their faithfulness to Scripture, are responsible for the notes and feature articles. No denominational bias appears which makes them suitable for evangelistic purposes. The recommendation to use them to give to our friends and relatives applies as much for these as for the previous notes on Romans.

**Four Weeks with Mark**  
32 pages. 60p. 1984. Bible Today Ltd.

In all general aspects this booklet is designed along the same lines as the two just reviewed. Australia, New Zealand, Fiji and Papua New Guinea are featured. One weekend topic has the title, 'The Occult — hidden danger!' It reads as follows:

### **The Occult — hidden danger!**

Throughout Mark's Gospel there is a tremendous emphasis upon the reality of spiritual forces, on the warfare between the power of God and the power of Satan.

### **Demons**

Although the possibility of angels is frowned upon by the 20th century, Mark's Gospel tells us clearly that they exist. Mark 1:13; 12:25; 13:32; 16:5. There are beings in the universe besides ourselves. Angels are not limited by physical bodies, but are spirits invisible to the human eye. There are good angels (Heb. 1:13-14), and there are evil angels (2 Cor. 11:14) which the Bible calls demons or evil spirits. Satan himself is a fallen angel.

C. S. Lewis gives us valuable advice: 'There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them.' Satan is pleased with either.

### **Occult practices**

The word *occult* means 'hidden'. Some people, knowingly or unknowingly, have contact with God's enemies in the hidden, invisible dimension of the universe. Seeking to discover the future by astrology and fortune-telling has become socially acceptable but in fact it is, at bottom, demonic (Acts 16:16-18). Even the seemingly innocuous newspaper horoscope leads people to rely less and less on the God-given gifts of mind and reason, and instead to take decisions based on lies (John 8:44). Trying to contact the dead, the Ouija board, seances, Satanism, faith healing other than in the name of Jesus, all these and more potentially involve contact with demons and are totally forbidden by God (Deut. 18:10-11).

Occult practices are unspeakably dangerous and can even seriously impair the spiritual life of any Christian who foolishly gets involved with them (1 Cor. 10:20-22). Jesus Christ can save and deliver those who are caught up with the occult, but drastic action has to be taken to finish with the whole practice (Acts 19:17-20).

### **Demon possession**

Jesus taught that when an individual life is empty of God it is in danger. Demons can gain a vicious and oppressive hold over people (Matt. 12:43-45). Jesus often met and dealt with people who were possessed by demons (for example Mark 1:32; 3:11; 5:1-20). Keen discernment is required. The Gospels carefully distinguish demon possession from epilepsy (Matt. 4:24). Throughout Mark's Gospel people who are possessed by demons show very negative and often violent reactions to the presence of the Holy Spirit and the Lord Jesus Christ (Mark 1:24; 5:7; 9:20). Spiritual authority is required to help demon-possessed people (Mark 3:15). Such authority only comes from strong faith and transparently righteous living which are the fruits of walking close to Jesus (Acts 19:13-16).

### **Jesus and Satan**

On the cross, Jesus didn't only deal with our sins. The cross also marks the climax of the battle between Jesus and Satan. There, Satan was utterly defeated (Col. 2:14-15; 1 John 3:8). His defeat at the cross seems to have led to a drastic reduction in the number of cases of demon possession. Compare the Gospels and the Acts.

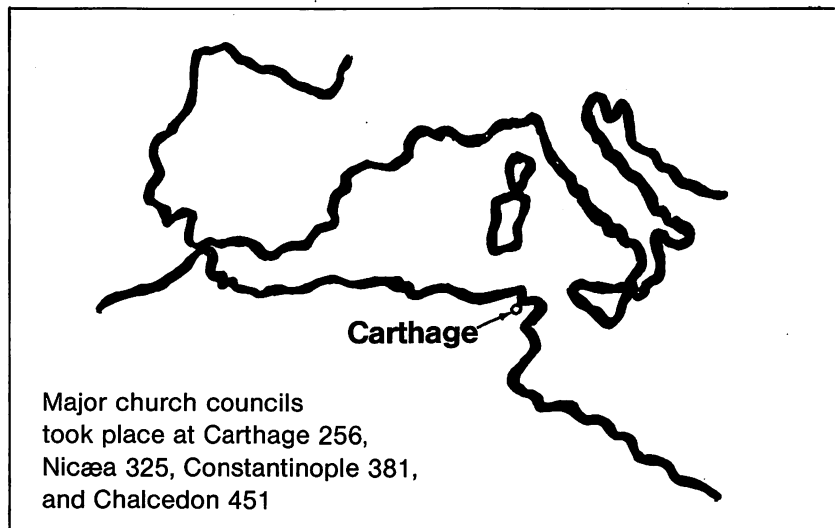
Satan is beaten. In practical terms, this means that as we as Christians stick close to Jesus, we can know the power of Jesus to defeat Satan and his ways (Eph. 6:10-20). We should be careful of Satan, but needn't be scared out of our wits by him (James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8-9).

**Man has explored many strange and amazing powers through the ages, but nothing is greater than the power of God and the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ.**

Readers can judge for themselves the clarity and relevance of the above.

*There is a close parallel between Tertullian and a few Christian leaders of our day. Many are the lessons to be learned and mistakes to avoid. Bill Payne is pastor of the Trinity Baptist Church, Burlington, Ontario. This biographical study was presented by him to The Fellowship for Reformation and Pastoral Studies, Ontario, in December 1982. It has been adapted for publication here.*

## Tertullian and his turning to Montanism



Quintus Septimus Florens Tertullianus, better known simply as Tertullian, is one of the most fascinating figures of ancient Christian history. Yet, like many of the early Church Fathers, he is something of a disturbing figure. A study of his life produces very mixed emotions in the student, for as one author expressed it, 'Tertullian seems to have been a mixture of the precious and the vile.' The reason for such a statement will hopefully become clearer as we learn more.

Unfortunately little is known about Tertullian's personal life, and especially of his life before he became a Christian. This much is known, that he was born in Carthage in North Africa about A.D. 150-160. His father was a pagan centurion who reared Tertullian in paganism, but who gave him a good education. He was familiar with heathen poetry, mythology and philosophy, and though he became the first Christian writer of note to use the Latin language, he was also quite at home with Greek. Tertullian showed great keenness of intellect and later trained for the legal profession. His early years were spent in the practice of law, politics and forensic eloquence. He spent thirty to forty years in heathenism, and seems to have been converted to Christianity about A.D. 190. We know very little of the circumstances or instruments which were used to

bring him to Christ. According to the historian Bettensen it was the courageous witness of the martyrs which was used. Certainly Tertullian's day was a day of persecution and many Christians sealed their testimony with their blood. Bettensen's suggestion may be correct.

When the Christian Church received Tertullian into its ranks it received a man of undoubted genius, but it received a man of fiery spirit, a man of passion who suffered from an impulsive and imbalanced temperament. Philip Schaff sums up Tertullian in this way: 'Tertullian was a rare genius, perfectly original and fresh, but angular, boisterous and eccentric; full of glowing fantasy, pointed wit, keen discernment, polemic dexterity and moral earnestness; but wanting in clearness, moderation and symmetrical development.

There can be no question concerning Tertullian's sincerity and his devotion to the Christian faith as he understood it, and he evokes sympathy in us as Christians by his willingness to defend the faith against all comers. He contended against heathens, Jews and heretics and was a prolific writer. He had no time for the Greek philosophers and describes them as 'the patriarchs of all heresies'. 'What has the academy to do with the church?' he asks; 'what has Christ to do with Plato, Jerusalem with Athens?' His writing style was a reflection of his turbulent spirit. To quote Schaff again, 'his writing style was terse, abrupt, laconic, sententious, nervous, figurative, full of hyperbole, sudden turns, legal technicalities, African provincialisms or rather antiquated or vulgar latinisms'. Neander said, 'he unites great gifts with great feelings'.

But though Tertullian evokes sympathy as a contender for the Faith, it is difficult to be sympathetic with the spirit in which he contends. Farrar says, 'he does not reason with the heathen: he does not try to win them by speaking the truth in love; his aim is to heat them to the earth'. Schaff expresses this element in a memorable sentence, 'his polemics everywhere leave marks of blood. It is a wonder he was not killed by the heathen or excommunicated by the Catholics'. 'He tortured scripture,' says Farrar, 'to make texts missiles to hurl at his opponents.' Tertullian seemed intent only on destroying his opponents and was therefore usually very severe with them.

### *The writings of Tertullian*

Tertullian's writings are generally reduced to four categories.

1. *Apologetics*. His work entitled 'Apologeticus', written somewhere between A.D. 197-200 is a plea for religious liberty. It is the first such plea in history from the pen of a Christian leader, though it was certainly not to be the last. The difference between this plea of Tertullian's and many others of later history is that Tertullian's was addressed to a pagan empire, while tragically the pleas for toleration through most of the rest of history were written to those who professed the Christian faith themselves. In 'Apologeticus' Tertullian repels the attacks of the heathen against the Christian faith and demands legal toleration for Christianity and equal rights with other sects of the Empire. This is one of Tertullian's most impressive works. As Schaff says, 'the cause of truth and



justice never found a more eloquent and fearless defender in the very face of despotic power and the blazing fires of persecution than the author of this book'. His work 'On the testimony of the soul' was a supplement to 'Apologeticus' and would therefore be classed under the 'Apologetics' category.

2. *Polemical.* In these writings Tertullian is mostly aiming at the refutation of the Gnostics. Numerous works fall under the category dealing with a variety of particular errors. 'On baptism,' 'On the soul,' 'On the flesh of Christ,' 'On the resurrection of the flesh' are examples of the titles in this category. However Tertullian's most celebrated polemical work is his 'Against Marcion', written in A.D. 208 In this work Tertullian defends the unity of God, the integrity of the scriptures and the harmony of the Old and New Testaments.

3. *Practical.* Under this category come works dealing with Prayer, Penance, Patience, the worship of idols, Roman theatres and circuses and imprisoned martyrs.

4. *Montanistic writings.* The subjects he deals with under this heading will be apparent when we look at his relationship with the Montanists, but we need to look first at some of Tertullian's doctrinal views.

#### *Tertullian's doctrinal views*

It would appear that Tertullian did not embrace Montanism because he was unhappy with orthodox Catholic doctrine. Rather he reacted to what he saw as moral laxity and weakness in the Catholic Church. Doctrinally, I repeat, he was orthodox in terms of his day, but the orthodoxy of his day was sadly lacking in many crucial areas.

Tertullian is often closely linked with the doctrine of the Trinity because he was the first to use some of the terminology which has been associated with Trinitarian discussion down the years. Though, as we have observed, in his work against Marcion he contends for the Unity of the Godhead, he also asserted distinctions within the Godhead. He is the first to use the words 'substance' and 'person' in trying to express the Trinitarian mystery.

Cunningham, who tends to be rather severe in his criticism of the Church Fathers, says, 'generally speaking he was orthodox on the person of Christ, though some of his statements on the eternity of the Son give ammunition to the Arians'. Cunningham also declares that Tertullian says little about the work and offices of Christ. It would appear that Tertullian was reasonably sound in regard to the doctrine of God though he failed to express the profundity of the mystery of the Trinity in adequate terms. We may well be sympathetic with him in this for who among us has not grappled with this profound truth and felt totally inadequate in expressing it? And this is with the benefit of almost 2,000 years of Christian thought and writing behind us. Remember that Tertullian was wrestling with this issue at the end of the second century, and beginning of the third.

Schaff says that Tertullian has 'a vivid sense of the corruption of human nature, and the absolute need for moral regeneration, yet the sad reality seems to be

that while Tertullian recognised the corruption of human nature and the need for moral regeneration, it is open to question whether he understood how that moral regeneration was brought about in a Biblical sense. To use Cunningham's expression, 'he manifests an exaggerated sense of the importance of mere external things'. The same author makes the following statement: 'Although he has made statements on the justification of the sinner which are pretty much in accordance with the general train of scriptural language, he has also made others which are clearly opposed to it. He has asserted the doctrine of justification by works; he has ascribed a meritorious bearing upon the forgiveness of sins to celibacy and almsgiving; and he has attaching to him the discredit of being the first to apply the word "satisfaction" to men's good deeds in their bearing upon the favour of God and the remission of sins.'

Tertullian lived in that age when a clear change was underway in terms of the ministry of the church. The New Testament model of several elders all sharing the oversight of a particular church and sharing equally in authority had given way to the 'bishop' being distinct from the 'elders'. From there of course things moved to the bishop having authority over numerous churches in a given area. An even more alarming departure from New Testament simplicity came about when the ministry began to be viewed as a priesthood. This situation was accelerated particularly by Cyprian the student and ardent admirer of Tertullian ('the Master' as Cyprian called him), but Schaff claims that it was Tertullian who first expressly and directly asserted sacerdotal claims on behalf of the ministry and called it 'sacerdotium'. Interestingly enough Schaff also says that Tertullian also affirmed the universal priesthood of believers. This, I believe, merely illustrates the fact that error usually moves in alongside of truth in terms of historical development and the two exist side by side for a time before error takes exclusive command of the territory. Interestingly enough, after he had thrown in his lot with the Montanists Tertullian in opposing the episcopal hierarchy of the Catholic Church emphasised that the church does not merely consist of 'bishops' and that the laity were also priests.

#### *Tertullian the Montanist*

Montanism (see article by Gwynne Lloyd Williams, *R.T.* 72), arose in Phrygia in Asia Minor about the middle of the second century. It took its name from its founder Montanus who was a converted priest of Cybele and a man of fanatical zeal. As we have already indicated Montanism was not so much a repudiation of Catholic doctrine as, in Farrar's words, 'a revolt against secularism and clericalism'. But Farrar's description might be inclined to throw a more pleasant light on Montanism than many would think it deserved. For instance Cunningham's comment on Montanism is that it was 'the first distinct manifestation of a fanatical spirit among persons who did not materially deviate from the standard of orthodoxy in doctrine'. There is no doubt that Montanism had about it much that would draw out our sympathy and support and it did not lack supporters in its day. In North Africa in particular it won many supporters and Gaul (modern France) provided considerable support also. The movement



*Pastor William Reid, Larne Baptist Church, County Antrim and Pastor Alan Barker of Sligo Baptist Church, Republic of Ireland, who is holding a copy of 'Reformation Today' as a reminder that he is our agent for the Republic*

continued, at least in Phrygia, for two or three hundred years. However we must add that there was also much about it which would have had the opposite effect. Though unquestionably there were many truly godly people associated with it, yet from an over-all perspective Montanism must be viewed as fanatical, legalistic and schismatic. Schaff's non-too flattering description is as follows: 'Montanism . . . was a morbid overstraining of the practical morality and discipline of the early church. It was an excessive supernaturalism and Puritanism against Gnostic rationalism and Catholic laxity. It is the first example of an earnest and well meaning but gloomy and fanatical hyper-Christianity which like all hyper-spiritualism is apt to end in the flesh.'

Tertullian was won over to Montanism, about A.D. 201 or 202 Jerome claimed that Tertullian embraced Montanism from personal motives, the foremost being reaction to poor treatment from the Roman clergy. There is considerable debate as to Tertullian's 'clerical status', whether he was ordained or not. Schaff states categorically 'Tertullian never rose above Presbyter'. It is quite possible therefore that Tertullian may have been the object of the envy of the Roman clergy; his prominence and his great ability may well have provoked the resentment of lesser men. Whatever the reason Tertullian did throw in his lot with the Montanists and became their most famous spokesman. Schaff says that Tertullian was far above the sect as a man and a theologian and gave it a respectability it did not really deserve.

Perhaps the most interesting feature of the Montanists was their claim to supernatural gifts, and particularly the gift of prophecy and the presence of glossalalia among them. Montanus himself claimed to be the inspired organ of

the Spirit, and was assisted in his work by two prophetesses, Priscilla and Maximilla. Tertullian taught an interesting four-fold development of religion. Stage one was natural religion or the innate idea of God. Stage two was the legal religion of the Old Testament. Stage three was the gospel during the earthly life of Christ, and stage four was the revelation of the Paraclete i.e. Montanism. We might see here the initial gropings after the discipline of Biblical Theology. But as Schaff points out, 'this is the first instance of a theory of development which assumes an advance beyond the New Testament and the Christianity of the apostles'. However it should be pointed out that Tertullian insisted that the new revelations did not disagree with orthodox standards. He placed most significance on the prophetic pronouncements which related to practical behaviour. As in our day a halfway-house for prophecy was established.

However, this claim to prophetic gifts and higher teachings of the Spirit fostered an arrogant spirit. The Montanists were the 'pneumatikoi' and the Catholics were the 'psuchikoi'. They viewed themselves, in the words of Moyer, as a 'spliritual aristocracy' and fell into the trap of spiritual pride.

The Montanists were Chiliasts (literalists). They were ardent believers in the imminent return of Christ and in the literal millennium on earth, which they believed would be focussed in Pepuza, a small village in Phrygia. They believed too in the universal priesthood in which females were included among the 'ministers' – so Priscilla, Maximilla and others. As indicated earlier Tertullian pressed this doctrine to counter the claims of the Catholic hierarchy, though his own teaching laid the foundation for the hierarchical system.

Montanism was strongly characterised by its legalism, severity and asceticism in practical areas. The following quotation from Schaff expresses well this aspect of the movement: 'Montanism turned with horror from all the enjoyments of life, and held even art to be incompatible with Christian soberness and humility. It forbade women all ornamental clothing, and required virgins to be veiled. It courted the blood baptism of martyrdom and condemned concealment or flight in persecution as a denial of Christ. It multiplied fasts and other ascetic exercises, and carried them to extreme severity, as the best preparation for the millennium. It prohibited second marriage as adultery, for laity as well as clergy, and inclined even to regard a single marriage as a mere concession on the part of God to the sensuous infirmity of man. It taught the impossibility of second repentance and refused to restore the lapsed to the fellowship of the Church. Tertullian held all mortal sins (of which he numbered seven) committed after baptism, to be unpardonable, at least in this world. . . .'

Tertullian's attitude toward marriage reveals not only his asceticism but also the strange mixture which was Tertullian. One of the most beautiful statements concerning marriage comes from Tertullian's pen. Consider the following, 'What a union of two believers – one hope, one vow, one discipline, one worship. They are brother and sister, two fellow servants, one spirit and one flesh. Where there is one flesh there is also one spirit. They pray together, fast together, instruct, exhort and support each other. They go together to the



church of God, and to the table of the Lord. They share each others tribulations, persecutions and revivals. Neither conceals anything from the other; neither avoids, neither annoys the other. They delight to visit the sick, supply the needy, give alms without constraint, and in daily zeal lay their offering before the altar without scruple or hindrance. They do not need to keep the sign of the cross hidden, nor to express slyly their Christian joy, nor to suppress the blessing. Psalms and hymns they sing together, and they vie with each other in singing to God. Christ rejoices when he sees and hears this; he gives them his peace. Where two are gathered in his name, there he is; and where he is there the evil one cannot come.' Yet this is the same man accurately described by Schaff, who held celibacy to be the superior state, and marriage to be simply a concession to the sensuous infirmity of man. Virtually all those who comment on Tertullian seem to agree that he went to the extreme of legalism; in Farrar's expressive words, 'Tertullian exaggerated the importance of trivialities'.

There is some evidence to indicate that during his later years he withdrew from the Montanists and founded a sect of his own, the 'Tertullianists', who seemed to have been somewhere between the Montanists and the Catholics. They continued until about the fifth century when the remnant of it appears to have been absorbed into Catholicism mostly through the influence of Augustine.

#### *Lessons to be Learned*

It seems to this writer that the life of Tertullian and his relationship with Montanism presents certain important lessons which ought to be observed by way of application.

First we note that claims to supernatural gifts, including prophecy and tongues are not new, but are a very ancient phenomenon in the church. This obviously has great interest to those who have to contend with current Charismatic claims. This kind of movement has surfaced periodically throughout the history of the church, perhaps the three most significant outcroppings being the Montanists of the early period we have been considering, the Irvingites of the 19th century (see article by Arnold Dallimore, *R.T.* 74) and the Charismatic movement of middle and late 20th century. Significantly all these movements have been characterised by the same features — claims to supernatural gifts, prophecy, tongue speaking, declaration of the imminent return of Christ, millennialism and the prominence of females.

Cunningham has a fascinating comparison between the Montanists and the Irvingites of his own day. I quote this in full because of its relevance. 'I do not recollect anything in the history of the church so like Montanism in all its leading features as one remarkable system which we have seen rise, decline and in a great measure fall, in our own day, though it has not had any distinct or specific name attached to it. In both cases there was, along with a professed subjection to Scripture, and an attempt to defend themselves by its statements, a claim to supernatural and miraculous communications of the Spirit, and a large measure of practical reliance upon these pretended communications for the warrant and sanction of their notions and practices. In both there was the

same great and offensive prominence of women as the chief possessors and exhibitors of supernatural endowments, and the same perversions of the same passages of Scripture to countenance these pretensions. In both there was the same assumption of superior knowledge and piety, the same compassionate contempt for those who did not embrace their views and join their party, and the same ferocious denunciations of men who actively and openly opposed their pretensions, as the enemies of God, and the despisers of the Holy Ghost; and the same tone of predicting judgements upon the community, because it rejected their claims. And, as if to complete the parallel, we find that as ancient Montanism, with all its follies and extravagances, received the countenance and support of Tertullian, who, though a man of powerful and vigorous mind, frequently appeals with all seriousness and reverence to the visions and revelations of gifted sisters, so the Montanism of our own day received the countenance and support of one noble minded and highly gifted man, who might have otherwise rendered important and permanent services to the Church of Christ, but whose history now stands out as a beacon to warn men from the rocks on which he struck. These modern exhibitions of fanatical folly, and unwarranted pretensions to supernatural communications, would scarcely have excited so much surprise, or produced so great a sensation, as they did in this country in recent times, if men had been better acquainted with the history of the Church, and with previous exhibitions of a similar kind; especially if they had been familiar with the history of ancient Montanism.'

The point should be underlined that good men may become caught up in dangerous and deluded movements. Irving was a good man, a man of genuine piety and sincerity as well as being a man of great gifts. History can only view him as a sad, perhaps tragic figure. Tertullian was a good man; in spite of the confusion and 'character warts' we see in him. There is much about him that is appealing. Such men ought to be a warning to others to beware of being sucked into movements which have an appeal, especially in a day of declension, and yet are not solidly based upon a true understanding of the Word of God. History provides the warning. The danger is real.

Secondly we should recognise that in the best of men there is a mixture of strength and weakness, light and darkness, the commendable and the objectionable. Tertullian is a good illustration of this. This should keep us on the one hand from putting any man, no matter how excellent, on a pedestal and thinking more highly of him than we ought to think, 'let no man glory in men'. When we do not take seriously that apostolic exhortation and we idolise a particular person the results can be very harmful when that particular person reveals, as he surely will in one way or another, some time or other, that after all he has feet of clay, and is but a sinner saved by grace. How true the old saying that the best of men are men at best. On the other hand, acknowledging the reality of this point should keep us from adopting an overly critical spirit towards our brethren. No one sees all that he should see; no one holds all of God's truth in perfect balance; no one is without inconsistencies.

We must always strive for greater understanding and a more perfect balance and the elimination of our weak areas.

Thirdly we should recognise the dangers of extremism and legalism. Tertullian's attitude towards second marriages, viewing them as virtual acts of adultery, and his insistence on excessive fasting are surely examples of this.

Then there was the matter of legalism which is the binding on a Christian's conscience that which has no clear warrant in the Word of God. I have Biblical warrant for telling a man that he must not live with another man's wife, and that if he does he will be put out of the church. But do I have Biblical warrant to tell a man that he must not own a television set, and if he does he will be put out of the church? The Montanists and Tertullian with them fell into this. Their forbidding of all 'ornamental clothing', the insistence on virgins being veiled, were examples of their legalistic spirit. But there is no doubt that it manifested itself in other ways too.

This leads naturally to our fourth application. We should learn from Tertullian the danger of a bad spirit in controversy. I don't want to be too hard on Tertullian here because it's easy to be an 'armchair critic' when you are removed from the scene of conflict. I want to keep in mind that he was a spokesman for a church which was literally fighting for its life. I salute him for his courage and ability in defending for its life. I salute him for his courage and ability in defending the cause of Christ against its adversaries whose aim was its destruction. But it does seem that he was not too concerned with how he conducted his verbal battles, so long as he won them. Tertullian was an impatient man by his own admission; he was of a fiery, passionate temperament, and was a man of very strong, we might say fierce conviction. It would seem that there was little attempt at self control, but that natural tendencies were given free rein in his interaction with those who differed from him. But the scripture does tell us to speak the truth in love; it does tell us that the man of God 'must not strive but be gentle unto all men . . .'. And it does tell us that the wisdom which is from above 'is first pure then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits . . .'.

The period of history we have been considering demonstrates that unsound movements are frequently the result of sinful weaknesses in 'orthodoxy'. Montanism gains our sympathy just because we see that the church in general at that time was degenerating and departing from the apostolic doctrine and practice. The sad thing about Montanism was that it had too many aberrations of its own and did not really present a balanced and Biblical alternative. It has often been pointed out that many of our modern day cults arose because they claimed to address issues and areas which ought to have been addressed by orthodox churches but which were not. It has been suggested by some that the success of the modern Charismatic movement has been accelerated by the coldness, undue formality and lack of human concern within so many 'orthodox' churches. If there is validity in such claims then our study today ought to challenge us to encourage an orthodoxy which is Biblical in all its parts and which meets the needs of people in all round fashion.

### *Conclusion*

But let me finish on a more positive note with respect to Tertullian and Montanism, namely, that it is valid for people to protest against departure from Biblical standards. We must be careful that our protests do not degenerate to a position where they foster sinful schism. An ever increasing proliferation of denominations is hardly desirable. Where ministers with love and patience are seeking to bring their churches into a greater conformity to scripture, they are to be encouraged and commended. It is vital to discern between those issues which are crucial and may demand dramatic protest, and issues which are really of minor and secondary significance.

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### **THE SIGN OF JONAH** (*continued from page 29*)

vindicated in a more spectacular manner than Jonah — one in whom the Gentiles come to the light and mercy of the Lord.

The sign of Jonah is a sign to unbelieving Israel. This is the reason for the prophet's inclusion in the canon of Old Testament Scripture. The chosen people in a state of rebellion and rejection are given a sign. A sign now heightened and magnified by the fulness of time. Behold, O Israel, the supreme sign — an empty tomb and the streaming of the Gentiles to the city of great David's greater Son. Behold, O people not a people, the Son of God offers you repentance unto life through His own life, death and resurrection. The harvest begun in the days of Jonah proceeds in these last days. The risen Lord commissions His messengers to go make disciples of the nations. Let Jew and Gentile embrace the Son. For He has given us a sign — from death to life. The death-life of this present evil age passes away; the resurrection-life of the age to come dawns for all nations. Truly a greater than Jonah is here!

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# The Sign of Jonah

*James T. Dennison, Jr.*

However bold the following statement may seem, I believe it is an accurate reflection of the history of interpretation — the book of Jonah continues to perplex and bewilder the church, much as the prophet himself who seems so unnerved by his commission. Interpreters of this little jewel have often left their hearers (and readers) with questions rather than with answers. Why did Jonah flee to Tarshish (1:3)? Why was he angry at God's relenting (3:10-4:1)? Why did he wish for death (4:8)? I am not suggesting that answers to these questions have not been advanced by preachers and commentators; nor am I suggesting that the answers tendered do not contain elements of truth. Yet, it seems to me that those wrestling with the dilemmas of the book of Jonah have not fully appreciated two essential considerations. First, what significance does the inclusion of Jonah in the sacred canon of Israelite Scripture have in interpreting the events of the book? Second, what significance does our Lord's remark about the sign of Jonah have as a clue to the meaning of the book?

Rationalistic and liberal commentators have no ultimate resolutions for the difficulties of this book for they reduce the work to a parable or semi-mythological construct. Hence, the historicity of this canonical work as endorsed by our Lord Himself remains problematic. Orthodox commentators have not adduced this difficulty, but still they leave us where the book ends — with questions (cf. 4:11). Let us take a fresh look at the book of Jonah in the light of the two considerations above.

When the worm gnaws its way into Jonah's gourd so that it withers (4:7), Jonah responds with anger and bitterness. His fury at the loss of his gourd is a parable of his anger with God who failed to destroy the Ninevites. The poet has represented the hillside scene as follows:

Oh greenly and fair in the lands of the sun  
The vines of the gourd and the rich melon run,  
Like that which o'er Nineveh's prophet once grew  
While he waited to know that his warning was true;  
And longed for the storm cloud and listened in vain  
For the rush of the whirlwind and the red fire-rain.

Jonah is not usually remembered as an angry prophet. Generally, we associate him with the great fish as we emphasise the stupendous miracle of his preservation and deliverance. The truth is, Jonah is the most furious of the prophets and insofar as we fail to understand the context of his anger, we fail to understand the meaning of his book. And if we fail to understand this angry prophet, we fail to understand: 1, why a book which apparently has nothing to do with Israel is included in the canon; and 2, the remark of our Lord (Mt. 12:39-41; cf. Lk. 11:29-30, 32).

This angry prophet manifests his displeasure on three occasions. When he is first commissioned to go to Nineveh (1:1, 2), he flees from his duty in angry rebellion. When the great fish spits him back upon the right path, he goes to Nineveh and preaches the sermon God directed, 'Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown' (3:4). That sermon — surely one of the shortest in the history of the church — is the instrument of a marvellous work of conviction and humiliation. The Ninevites give themselves up to the mercy of God while acknowledging the just deserts of their sins (3:5ff). Shortly after this, Jonah becomes angry with God for the second time as he watches in vain 'for the rush of the whirlwind and the red fire-rain'. While he awaits the fireworks from his hillside campsite, God provides relief from the burning sun by means of a shade gourd. But when the worm kills the gourd, Jonah is angry with the Lord for the third time (4:9).

Superficially considered, the prophet's anger appears easily explainable. He did not want to go to Nineveh — hence becomes angry when commissioned to that task. He did not enjoy preaching one thing (destruction) and finding God doing the opposite (sparing the city). He did not like the sun beating upon his head and the death of his shade inflames his fury. Yet if we look below the surface of Jonah's anger and probe more deeply the fury of this prophet, we discover a common thread woven through each of the three incidents. Something is gnawing at Jonah! Something continues to chew away at his soul whether he is on his way down to Joppa, preaching his way through Nineveh or sitting under his shade gourd. Even before 'the word of the Lord came to Jonah' (1:1), he was angry. What was the source of Jonah's anger in every instance of its manifestation? I would suggest that it was related to the fact that Jonah was a prophet *of, to and for Israel!* Jonah was a home-born Jewish prophet — son of Amittai of Gath-hepher (2 Kings 14:25). He was commissioned to preach to the Israel of Jeroboam II (ca. 793-753 B.C.): hence was a contemporary of Hosea and Amos (cf. Hosea 1:1, Amos 1:1 and 2 Kings 14:23, 24), Jonah was a prophet *for* Israel. While he prophesied prosperity for Israel (cf. 2 Kings 14:25, 26), it was a prosperity derived from the grace of God. Israel in the days of Jeroboam II was not godly (cf. 2 Kings 14:24; Hosea 4 and Amos 5, 6). Thus we may imagine Jonah pleading with an affluent society to remember her covenant Lord. For all her prosperity, Israel was decadent, perverse and idolatrous. Jonah undoubtedly raised his voice with others urging Israel to return to the Lord, forsake her idols, humble herself in sackcloth and ashes casting herself upon the mercy of her Sovereign. But she would not!

Therefore when God commissioned Jonah to go to Nineveh, his response was maddening disbelief. He had preached to hardhearted Israel without success. The chosen people would not listen. What then was the likelihood of the heathen hearing? Jonah's words had fallen on deaf ears in his homeland; he was angry at the thought of yet more failure in a pagan land. After all, the Assyrians had not been Israel's benefactors! Although he acknowledged the mercy of God (4:2), he balked at the thought of a covenant prophet prostituting his gifts before the Gentiles.

The sovereign Lord has determined the opposite. Jonah is to preach the Word of the Lord to the Gentiles even if God must pursue him with wind and wave to the ends of the earth. Even if God must send a great fish to suck him up off the bottom of the ocean; even if God must give him up to death for three days and three nights in order that he may be vomited out to life anew. God's ways are not Jonah's ways and Jonah must learn the redemptive purposes of God. Jonah is rapidly convinced that his Pursuer is relentless. By the time he has nearly drowned in the Mediterranean Sea; nearly gone stir-crazy from the darkness of a living tomb; nearly strangled on the seaweed floating about his head (2:5) — he has become very cooperative.

In Nineveh, Jonah preaches his sermon, leaves the city, puts up his little booth and camps out to wait for the fire and brimstone. In the spirit of the annual holiday shopping countdown, one imagines Jonah counting 40, 39, 38, 37. . . . As he nears the zero hour, his expectations are more and more aroused — 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. . . . Day 40 dawns, but there is no fiery spectacular. No great balls of fire — no thunder claps of destruction — no smoke and sulphur. Nothing!

The pent up anger of failing again is released. He has preached repentance to Israel without result. He says, 'Yet forty days . . .' and there is no destruction. His words have failed to produce the effect he expects. In despair he cries, 'I wish I were dead' (4:8). God responds with a parable in horticulture. Indeed, the lesson of Jonah's gourd is an audio-visual entitled — 'My Ways Are Not Your Ways.'

God asks Jonah to discern his sovereign redemptive purpose in the display of mercy to the Gentiles. And the purpose of showing mercy is reflexive — to provoke Israel to conviction, humiliation and repentance. God gives repentance unto life to the Ninevites so that a sign will be recorded in the canon of the Scriptures of Israel. God gives repentance to the Gentiles through Jonah in order to anticipate the mission of one greater than Jonah.

The key which unlocks the meaning of the mission of Jonah is the comment which Jesus made to another generation of the chosen people — 'no sign . . . but the sign of the prophet Jonah' (Mt. 12:39; Lk. 11:29). A sign is given to the Israel of Christ's day — it is the sign of Jonah. How is Jonah a sign to the Israel of our Lord's era? Consider the following parallels. Jonah was a preacher of repentance, vindicated (as a messenger of God) by 'death' and 'resurrection' who brought good tidings to the heathen in order that Israel herself might be stirred to heed the prophet's voice. So it was with the eschatological prophet. Jesus preached to Israel, 'Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand' (Mt. 4:17). But she would not (cf. Mt. 23:37). Jesus was delivered up to death — three days and three nights in the belly of the earth. He was vindicated or justified as the Son of God in power (Rom. 1:4; 1 Tim 3:16) by resurrection from the grave. He commissioned his representatives to go to the Gentiles and command men everywhere to repent and believe. And lo, the Gentiles do repent and believe. All of this serves God's sovereign purpose to provoke Israel to jealousy (Rom. 10:19; 11:13, 14) that she may heed the voice of one greater than Jonah — one

*(continued on page 26)*



## Not By Might

It is very important to grasp that God's kingdom is established by spiritual means. Many Christians believe that the more impressively you present Christianity the more likely you are to win the non-Christian. And so in their discussions they feel they must try to prove just how fabulous Christianity really is. For example, how many Christians there are in the world, how many Scientists acknowledge the possibility of the existence of God, how many famous film and TV personalities have become Christians, how many people attended some rally. How big! How vast! How colossal! How impressive! How remarkable! etc. I am sure you know what I mean. Now, lest I be misunderstood let me say that God sometimes uses impressions to draw men to himself. An unconverted man may very well attend a large rally. He may be amazed and consequently determine to find out what has brought so many people together. That may be his first faltering step towards the Gospel. Secondly there are occasions in University classrooms, offices or other places of work, when non-Christians dismiss the Christian faith as insignificant and only to be believed by small children or very old ladies. In such situations the Christian should not hesitate to refute such nonsense in a quiet but determined manner. Of course he must state facts and correct false impressions.

What I wish to warn against is a worldly and boastful attitude of heart and mind which believes that the world can be won to Christ if we make the Christian faith bigger, better, greater, and more impressive than anything else on earth! Unfortunately some believers feel that if they cannot quote 'big name Christians' and cite impressive facts and statistics, or, if they cannot describe

some Christian singing group as fantastic, then they cannot testify or witness to Christ. In fact they are often too ashamed to say anything and just remain mute.

We need to remember that this is not God's way of winning men and women to Christ. In 1 Corinthians 1:18-31 Paul goes into a great deal of detail on this very matter. What he says can be summed up like this: God's method of Salvation is precisely not to employ worldly wisdom, the philosophies of this age, persuasive oratory, impressive arguments, etc. 'Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom.' A miraculous sign would be something spectacular and imposing while wisdom would constitute sophisticated and brilliant arguments. No, says Paul, 'When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God.'

But why is it that God's Word does not use this method? Why does it in fact condemn it? Answer: if people are won over by fine speeches, brilliant arguments, spectacular facts, flashy impressions about the 'bigness' and 'greatness' of the Christian faith, then whence would faith in Christ come in? Would 'faith' not be redundant? All you would need to do would be to overpower the non-Christian with your impressive arguments and then he would capitulate and surrender. You might have overpowered him and beaten his mind into submission. But is that the same as responding to the work of the blessed Holy Spirit who shows a man his sinfulness and then shows him the Cross of our Lord? Does not the Holy Spirit draw by love and grace?

All this reminds us of that most appropriate saying of the prophet Zechariah: *'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit! says the Lord Almighty'* (Zech. 4:6).

# Can we be sure about Jesus?

## JESUS and the four Gospels

John Drane

184pp pocket size paperback £1.95

*A discussion of the issues and a review of the book*

The natural mind being what Scripture describes it to be, at enmity to God (Rom. 8:7), we should not be surprised at the variety of attacks that are made upon the Gospel of Christ. A recent example of this was the production by London Weekend Television of a short series of programmes adding up to about two and a half hours worth, with the title, Jesus — the evidence? The main contention in the series is that Biblical scholarship has shown that it is impossible to discover the historical Jesus in the text of the New Testament.

The claim is that materials have been discovered which show that Jesus was involved in occult practices, hypnosis and sexual rites. In addition to this it is purported that the notion that Jesus is God is the creation of the Roman Church during the 4th century. The Church then is supposed to have suppressed what they considered non-canonical materials because they conflicted with their ideas.

Now it is important that we should consider carefully that basis upon which our faith in the Jesus of history depends. Certainly it does rest upon the four accounts provided, namely Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, but not in isolation from the rest of Scripture. It is when we view the testimony of the four Gospels in the setting of the whole of the Old Testament, and in harmony or unity with the rest of the New Testament, that we feel the impact of the glorious reality of the Son of God in his life, death, resurrection and ascension. The four Gospels form an integral part of the complete revelation. Not only do the four biographies of Jesus complement each other but they complement the Canon of Scripture as a whole. The united testimony in its promises and fulfillments, together with its expositions of the atonement of the Lamb is like a mighty fortress, impregnable, precisely because the whole structure is bonded together section by section.

When we turn back to those early years when the New Testament was in the making we find that there was no shortage of sectaries who wrote about Jesus in a way which suited themselves and their views. When we reflect on this we can see that such a thing was inevitable. In every age there are those who seek to cash in on famous personalities by portraying them in a dramatic way. Journalism of that kind forms an

enormous industry today. In an age of many sects and parties we can expect a lot of writing. But in our quest for accurate descriptions those who were actually with Jesus and appointed by him, are going to have the priority. Such a person was John the apostle. Who had a closer or more intimate observation of our Lord than he? The merit of each of the Gospel narrators has to be considered. For instance with Luke we are confronted with an historian who tells us his motives for writing and then sets about it in such a way that no room is left to doubt his integrity.

Having reviewed this background we have to consider the pseudo Gospel writings and discover by their very nature that they consist of a rag bag of pieces which come off the rubbish heap of history. It does not take much to discern what is infantile, legendary and apocryphal. Very soon we can see why the early Church leaders rejected the pseudo writings about Jesus. They did this not because they felt threatened but because of the worthless nature of the materials.

A modern researcher by the name of Morton Smith claims that he has discovered a secret gospel. In this modern age it is exceedingly exciting to find ancient texts. However this one has proved to be no more than a wretched fragment. It is as poor in its cohesion as it is bankrupt in any authoritative declaration about the Messiah. We would not waste our time with it except that the TV producers have descended upon it, spent £350,000 or more, and produced something which will seriously stumble many who are ignorant of the Bible. The producers have selected only that material which supports the idea that no clear picture of Jesus can be depended upon. They have been guided by the misconception that all the early materials have an equal claim upon our credibility.

John Drane's book combats all this. It has been reset in a mass-market paperback form and includes a new nine page introduction addressing the issues raised by the London Weekend Television series which we have just discussed. In the new introduction the author does not refer specifically to the series. This is wise as the issues involved will probably come up again in different forms.

The material provided is substantial and is presented in three sections. The first examines the world into which Jesus came, the circumstances of his birth, the Messianic titles and the light they bring as to who Jesus was, the historicity and meaning of Jesus' death, and then the factual data which relates to his resurrection.

Section two is devoted to the teachings of our Lord and the meaning of the miracles, while the third discusses the nature of the four Gospels especially with their veracity in view. Exactly what is involved in writing a Gospel is considered as well as the relationship of the Gospels to each other. The concluding chapter, 'Are the Gospels true?', is particularly interesting and relevant. The theories of Rudolf Bultmann are examined. Bultmann was an arch-liberal who worked within a closed framework of the natural which excludes the supernatural. The theories of others like K. L. Schmidt and Dibelius are also considered with rather more patience than we would exercise. The Gospel of Thomas, says the author, is regarded unanimously by the scholars as a document produced to uphold the

beliefs of a particular sect.

Distasteful as the exercise may be it is important that we be informed about these issues and be equipped to help those who easily imbibe the nonsense put over by the mass media. It is helpful to have much material describing the realities of the world into which Jesus was born presented in an orderly and interesting way. There are points that can be criticised. For instance the desperate unbelief of many of the scholars quoted is hidden from the readers. It is all so scientific but then we must bear in mind that whatever the weaknesses in presentation this is a genuine and helpful defence of the historical foundations essential to our faith.

It is not only the weak that are liable to be destroyed by Liberal teachings. I remember well the case of a Reformed Baptist minister who went to study theology at Rushlikon in Switzerland. He imbibed the views of Bultmann which destroyed his faith. He left the ministry, divorced his wife and became immune to all efforts to recover him to faith in Christ. May our faith be strong and our spirits bold to rescue any who may be in danger.

## THE WHITEFIELD FRATERNAL

On April 16th Don Carson, using a scrap of paper for his outline gave a masterly survey of recent developments concerning the doctrine of Scripture. This is of much value to busy pastors who are unable to keep abreast with these developments. Copious information was packed into 68 minutes. To balance this intellectual material the second address by Don Carson was on Pauline praying (44 mins.). This dealt forthrightly with our practical and experimental needs. The cassettes are available from Carey Recording Studios, 13 Lucastes Avenue, Haywards Heath, West Sussex RH16 1JE.

The remaining programme for 1984 is as follows:

### Tuesday, June 19th

- |            |                 |   |
|------------|-----------------|---|
| 9.00 a.m.  | Breakfast       | Independent Church, Haslett Avenue, THREE BRIDGES<br>(opposite railway station) (Tel: Graham Stevens, Crawley 517073)   |
| 9.30 a.m.  | Session 1       | Steve Dray — Two Testaments — One Bible<br>A framework for the interpreting of the O.T. The importance of this subject for evangelical unity and significance for the proclamation of the whole counsel of God. |
| 11.00 a.m. | Session 2       | Geoff Thomas — Preaching the New Covenant   |
| 12.30 p.m. | homeward bound! |   |

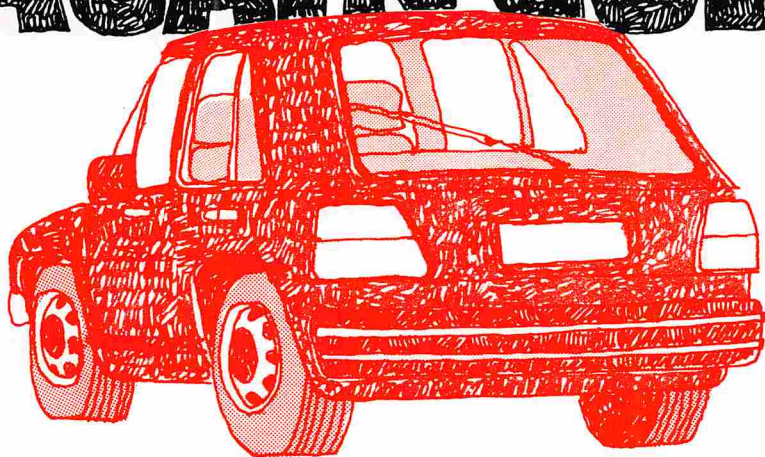
### Monday, September 24th

- |            |           |   |
|------------|-----------|---|
| 10.30 a.m. | Breakfast | Cuckfield Baptist Church, London Road, CUCKFIELD  |
| 11.00 a.m. | Session 1 | Dr. Tom Nettles (Mid America Baptist Seminary)<br>The speaker is professor in Church history. He is speaking on the subject of Andrew Fuller at the U.S.A. Banner conference this year. The subjects for the Whitefield fraternal are being negotiated. |
| 2.00 p.m.  | Session 2 | (Lunch at 1.00)   |

### Monday, November 26th

- |            |                 |   |
|------------|-----------------|---|
| 9.00 a.m.  | Breakfast       | F.I.E.C. Church, New England Road, HAYWARDS HEATH   |
| 9.30 a.m.  | Session 1       | Dr. Samuel Logan (Westminster Seminary, U.S.A.)<br>1. The founding of the Holy Commonwealth in New England<br>2. Jonathan Edwards' doctrine of Justification by faith — is it Biblical? |
| 11.00 a.m. | Session 2       |   |
| 12.30 p.m. | homeward bound! |   |

# BORN AGAIN GOLF



We suppose it had to come! Born again politicians, born again sports personalities, born again film stars, and - now wait for it - **A born again car!**

The glib use of the phrase "Born Again" rather debases a wonderful truth found in the Bible. A very sincere religious leader named Nicodemus once came to the Lord Jesus Christ to discuss religion. Jesus wasn't so much interested in a religious debate as in Nicodemus's greatest need—to be born again.

## **What does it mean to be born again?**

It isn't just an all round improvement as with the car—it is complete transformation! A better way of putting it is "Born from above". New birth is a supernatural work of God in a person's life. It brings love for God and obedience to his will, forgiveness of sin, peace with God and wonderful joy. All possible because Jesus died for sinners. He conquered death and lives today.

Jesus did give Nicodemus a very urgent and serious warning—unless a man is born again, he cannot enter the kingdom of God (see Gospel of John, chapter 3, verses 3 and 5). To put it bluntly—if you are not born again, you are not a Christian!

God's concern isn't born again cars, but born again people. Want to know more? Please do contact us — we would be delighted to help you.



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