

REFORM- ATION TODAY'85

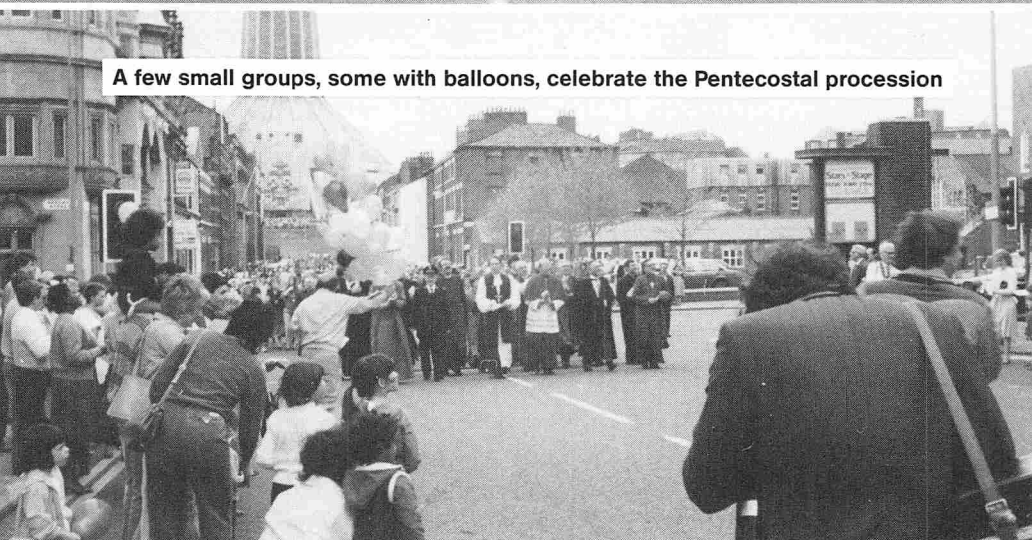


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The procession takes the route along Hope Street which joins the two cathedrals



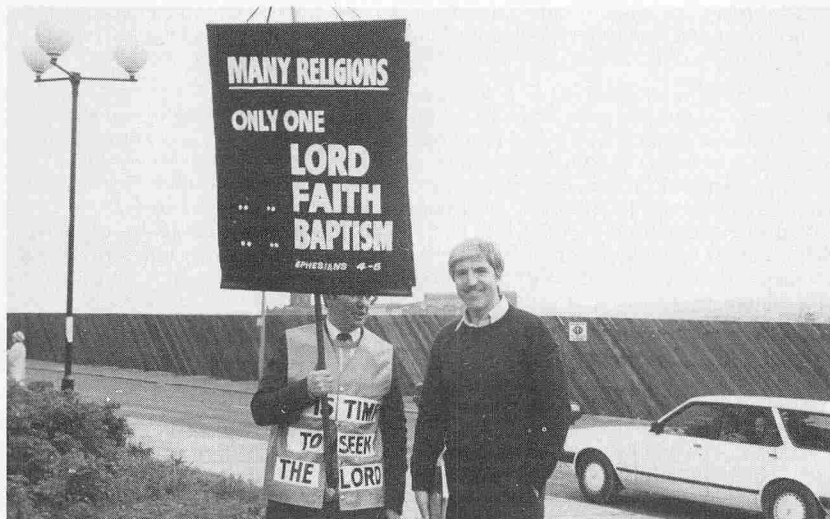
A few small groups, some with balloons, celebrate the Pentecostal procession



We are not sure whether this is a mime or drama group

Editorial

The pictures in this issue all illustrate a single ecumenical event which took place on Whit Sunday (Pentecost), 26th May. On that day there was a signing of a covenant of unity by the leaders of the ecumenical movement of Merseyside in the Anglican Cathedral. Before this signing there took place a service of unity in the Roman Catholic Cathedral followed by a march led by the ecumenical leaders; Roman Catholic, Anglican, Baptist, United Reformed, Methodist and Salvation Army. The street connecting the two cathedrals is called Hope Street referred to by Pope John Paul II as a symbol of hope for unity when he visited Liverpool.



Vincent Hessey, our 'Reformation Today' agent at the Carey Ministers' Conferences, chats with a Protestant with his banner

Looking at the photos (which have lost some of their sharpness due to having been taken in colour) we see first of all the leaders leaving the Roman Catholic Cathedral — from left to right, the Salvation Army officer, Anglican Bishop David Sheppard (see letter addressed to him page 31), and Roman Catholic Archbishop Derek Worlock. At the top of the page opposite we see the procession marching along Hope Street. The congregation of 3,500 (not 5,000 as reported in the secular press), mostly Roman Catholics followed the bishops in the procession. It was hoped that literally thousands would line the streets but a careful inspection of the top photo shows few people on the sidewalks some of whom were our observers. In the middle picture opposite we see a few people with balloons and the R.C. Cathedral in the background, and next four girls of CROSSFIRE (Mission England — see article on page 28).

Turning to the back inside cover we see at the top of the page a group of Protestants with their banners, the most prominent of which reads 'NO POPERY'. On the left a lad is holding a message, 'The Ecumenical ship sails again, bound for Rome!' With the city of Liverpool in the background we see the procession heading

Cover picture: The Salvation Army officer, Bishop David Sheppard and Roman Catholic Archbishop Worlock leave the R.C. cathedral.

up toward the Anglican Cathedral. On the right in the cassock is Canon Michael Wolfe, full-time ecumenical officer for Merseyside and on his right a young minister who preached the gospel to the procession for much of the way reminding them that they had left out the Bible in their reckoning.

Finally as the procession heads up toward the massive Anglican Cathedral we see not thousands but about a dozen people including two Protestants with their Gospel texts held aloft.

The Merseyside situation is one in which the Roman Catholic religion and the biblical beliefs of Protestants are seen more clearly than in other parts of England. In the last issue some readers misunderstood the reference to separatists. I apologise for not being more specific. The best way of gaining clarity is to use the old catechetical method of question and answer to which we resort on page 28. The title used for the article, 'no gospel in the Ecumenical Movement' is appropriate because it points to the most glaring omission in the unity expressed by this false movement, a unity destitute of the saving gospel of Christ.

Arnold Dallimore writes about T. T. Shields

The author of the two great volumes on the life of George Whitefield, and shorter biographies of Edward Irving and more recently C. H. Spurgeon, is a much loved friend. It is not easy to write about someone not too far away in years. Arnold Dallimore knew T. T. Shields well having trained at the Toronto Bible Seminary, Jarvis Street. An astute observer, Dr. Dallimore has much insight into the contrasting strengths and weaknesses of T. T. Shields who was the pastor of Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, from 1910 to 1955. It is controversial to write about someone who himself was very controversial. A full biography of T. T. Shields with descriptions of the period in which he lived would be fascinating but it would be a formidable undertaking.

The altar call

The invitation system used by T. T. Shields referred to at the end of the article by Arnold Dallimore is more common in North America than it is in the U.K. Very little has been done to analyse the altar call as a system. For this reason the study with the title 'The Great Invitation' (see R.T. 76, page 2) has been extended and is now called 'The Great Invitation and the Altar Call'. Ten of the eleven chapters are now complete and have been corrected by experienced editors. E.P. are interested in publishing the book. One chapter analyses the theology of William Perkins, Jonathan Edwards, C. H. Spurgeon and Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, analysing why the mentality of such theology is averse to using the altar call as a system. T. T. Shields was more of a fundamentalist than he was reformed, which position also led to the difference between him and Dr. Lloyd-Jones described in Iain Murray's biography (p. 272 ff.).

Persuasion, and the missionary theology of the founding fathers

The article by Tom Nettles marks the time when he prepares to return with his family to Memphis, Tennessee. His ministry has been much used at the Carey Conference and at Cuckfield. The property, 5 Fairfield Close, where the Nettles family have been staying, has now been sold and we are looking for a similar home in Liverpool. In the meantime the church at Belvidere Road has accommodated my library and will continue to accommodate much of the literature work. We continue to use 361 Aigburth Road, Liverpool L17 0BP, as our mailing address.

The article, 'The missionary theology of the founding fathers', by Tom Nettles is being published as a 16 page booklet by Carey Publications, details to be announced later.

Baruch Maoz, Israel and Exhortation

The modern counterparts of the Pharisees of Jesus' time have been the cause of severe harassment to the church pastored by Baruch Maoz in Israel. From his excellent expository ministry is gleaned the material on exhortation which is strongly recommended especially since the subject has a vital role in the local church.

This is the first of two expositions on the subject of exhortation by Baruch Maoz of Israel.

Exhortation

‘Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God’ (Heb 3:12). The author of the letter to the Hebrews encourages his readers to walk steadily in God’s way, despite the difficulties. Here he is warning them against a danger which caused their ancestors (and ours) to stumble: a deceitful heart (v. 10), ‘an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God’.

In verse 13 of this chapter the writer explains how to avoid such deceit in the heart, when he says, ‘exhort one another daily, while it is called today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin’. One instrument meant to help us avoid straying from God’s way is exhortation: each one of us is to be exhorted, and each of us is to exhort others.

What is exhortation?

Two expressions are used in the New Testament original for the concept ‘to exhort’. The first is *epitimao* which is usually translated ‘rebuke’. This word is seldom used in relation to believers. Jesus ‘rebuked’ the wind and the sea; he ‘rebuked’ evil spirit and cast it out of man and he ‘rebuked’ Satan. An example of this term’s use to describe an action taken towards believers is found when Jesus rebuked Simon Peter, saying, ‘Get thee behind me, Satan!’ (Matt 16:23).

The more common expression is ‘*parakaleo*’. While *epitimao* means to measure the values or actions of man and set one’s attitude in relation to him accordingly, the word *parakaleo* expresses a completely different concept. It means to comfort (Matt 2:18), to beseech, to plead (Matt 8:5, Acts 19:31), to request (Acts 14:22). Exhortation is a gentle appeal directed to the heart. It is a request. In some places the same Greek word is used meaning ‘to pray’. In the passage before us now ‘to exhort’ is to address someone with a view to persuading him towards a course of action, to encourage, stimulate and awaken him to do the right thing. Exhorting, then is not to trample under one’s feet, but is to build up. It is an expression of a desire to do good, an act of love.

The Motive for exhortation

We love our brother. For this reason we wish to remove everything that might obstruct our enjoyment of his company, any sin he may have committed, any mistake we have made in our own mind about him. We want to be fair toward him and to provide an opportunity for problems to be aired and openly dealt with. Only hatred keeps us from exhorting: ‘You are to do no unrighteousness in judgment . . . you are not to walk about like a talebearer among the people;

you are not to hate your brother in your heart; but you are in any case to rebuke your neighbour, and not suffer sin to remain upon him . . . you are not to avenge, nor bear any grudge against those who belong to your nation, but you are to love your fellow as yourself' (Lev 19:15-18). Exhortation is meant to destroy dividing walls and to preserve relationships of love and friendship.

Love teaches us to care about our neighbour and to desire his wellbeing (this is all the more true in relation to our fellow Christian); seeing him sin, we want to help him understand this is the case so that he will stop sinning and seek forgiveness from God.

We exhort because we want to keep the church pure. Sin must never be ignored because hidden sin will spread until it infects the whole body. We exhort because we love God. His glory is dear to our hearts; we do not want his church and his witness to be infected by the sins of those who call themselves believers. Although each of these is also dearly beloved, God is more so.

We exhort because we also want to be exhorted. The way of loving exhortation is the way of life and truth. 'He who converts a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death and hide a multitude of sins' (Jas 5:19-20). It is not clear from these verses precisely whose soul will be saved by exhortation nor whose sins will be hidden, whether it be those of the sinner or of the exhorter. But it is certainly clear that to refuse to recognise and repent of sins is to die in them; therefore, exhortation that will bring us to repent is a tool in the hands of God for our salvation and sanctification. The text includes the exhorter too. A man who is ready to exhort others thus makes it known that he himself is ready to accept exhortation. By his deed he is calling others to fulfil the same loving duty toward himself. Thus the exhorter saves his own soul as well as that of his fellow believer who has sinned, covering a multitude of sins.

How to exhort

'Count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother' (2 Thess 3:15). We should exhort each other only after we have thought through the best way to do so, ensuring that our exhortation is indeed an act of love and not an expression of bitterness, anger or jealousy.

We should not be hasty to exhort; error might cause great harm. 1. Check the facts: is the problem really something which deserves exhortation? Is the person really guilty of what is attributed to him? Examine your heart: are you free of jealousy, pride and other such motives? 2. Exhort humbly: it is possible that you are mistaken. Perhaps your motives are wrong after all. Each of us is liable to fall into sin! Remember your own weakness and exhort with a sense of gratitude to God for forgiving you. Such an attitude will soften the bite of your exhortation and make it far more acceptable. 'Sweet lips increase instruction' — make sure your own lips are not heated by the fires of misguided judgment.

We should greatly beware of the tendency to think that we always have the right to speak our mind. Not everything is our business: 'We beseech you, brethren, that . . . you study to be quiet and to be involved in your own business' (1 Thess 4:10-11).

3. Consider when is the best time to make your remarks. Is the person concerned presently capable of accepting our exhortation? Perhaps he is too burdened at the moment. Too involved for us to expect he could really weigh what we wish to say to him. Is it not best that we wait for a period before we speak? Is the person concerned a 'scorner', too proud to listen? Too proud to learn? 'A scorner loves not him who reproves him' (Prov 15:12).

Exhort most respectfully, without abuse and without anger. Do not seek to humiliate. Remember to exhort is not to judge. Our position is not that of a superior appointed to judge other people. It is of one appealing to his beloved fellow. Exhortation must sometimes be hard or even public, but such measure should be engaged in very carefully and only in proportion to the authority given us. 'Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, you which are spiritual are to restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering yourself, lest you also be tempted' (Gal 6:1). Public exhortation is indeed sometimes needed: 'Those that sin rebuke before all so that others also may fear' (1 Tim 5:20) — but this is true only in rare cases in which the duty of public exhortation usually falls upon the elders, not upon anyone who thinks he may have something to say.

Exhortation should first be done 'between you and him alone'. Only if your brother refuses to listen, are you to 'take with you one or two more', who are to listen and arbitrate. Be open to the possibility that you are wrong, because that may well be their decision! If it is, accept it as you would expect your fellow to accept your own exhortation. 'If he shall neglect to hear them,' then bring the matter to the congregation.

We should especially be careful in exhorting an elder. Due to their position, elders are subject to Satan's special attention. The evil one will do anything possible to devalue their service in our eyes by raising accusations against them, planting suspicion in the congregation's minds. The Scriptures tell us that two or three witnesses are needed to prove every accusation. The witnesses must be not merely people that heard about the case from someone else, but those who have a personal acquaintance with its facts. This is doubly true in relation to elders. 'Rebuke not an elder, but entreat him as a father' (1 Tim 5:1-2). Never use exhortation as an instrument of rebellion. If you must rebuke an elder, do so, but make sure you do so in an attitude of respect.

The necessity for exhortation

'Exhort one another while it is called *today*'. We all need exhortation in order to nudge us closer to an awareness and avoidance of sin. None of us is perfect. Nor will we ever draw nearer to perfection unless we are willing to help and be helped through exhortation.

DON'T FORGET!

The Carey Conference for Ministers, November 1985

High Leigh, Hoddesdon, Herts

November 26-28, 1985

Theme: The Reformed Faith

Speakers include Donald MacLeod

for details write to John Rubens, 10 Glebe Road, Welwyn, Herts

This is a constant need. As long as the Holy Spirit says 'Today if ye will hear his voice' (Ps 95:7), as long as we sin, we should be ready to accept exhortation and repent. We will never be so perfect that we will not need each other's loving exhortation.

Exhortation is a duty, not just a privilege

The Scriptures speak clearly: 'If your brother trespass against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone' (Matt 18:15). Our duty is to clarify matters, not to nurse hatred and negative thoughts. 'He that rebukes a man shall afterwards find more favour than he that flatters with his tongue' (Prov 28:23). If we see a man sinning, or about to sin, but say nothing to him, we contribute to his destruction.

The usefulness of exhortation

Exhortation is a means of growth in God's way. When exhortation prevails in a biblical manner this contributes to the sanctification of the whole body and thus to our mutual growth in love. Exhortation can save us from 'an evil heart of unbelief', and from the possibility that we 'be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin'.

An honest, open exhortation met by an equal readiness to accept exhortation opens the way to real Christian fellowship, to the presence of God and to real forgiveness. 'Men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. Everyone that does evil hates the light, nor does he come to the light lest his deeds should be reproved' (Jn 3:19-20). By exposing sin – that is, by exhortation – and by accepting it, we pass from darkness to blessed light.

How to accept and respond to exhortation

None of us is perfect. We all stand by God's grace and not by virtue of personal achievement. This is a fundamental truth of the gospel. Recognition of our sin and of the redemptive grace of God is the necessary step toward salvation. God's love for us is an atoning and forgiving love. Our love must be a forgiving love. Because of Christ and for his sake we cover and forget our brother's wickedness.

'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; but fools despise wisdom and instruction' (Prov 1:7). Willingness to accept exhortation testifies to fear of God and leads to knowledge and growth. It is no shame to be exhorted. To accept admonition and exhortation is to recognise this and to derive all the benefit from this needed instrument of God's grace.

Dr. T. T. Shields

by Dr. Arnold Dallimore

From 1910 till his death in 1955 Dr. T. T. Shields was the pastor of Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto. During that time, although he suffered much abuse by the media on account of his battle against modernism and against Rome, his ministry of biblical exposition and gospel declaration was such that numerous people consider him the greatest preacher Canada has ever known.

Dr. Shields was born in Bristol, England, in 1873. His father, a Methodist minister, upon coming into Baptist beliefs, emigrated to Canada and became pastor of a Baptist church. He became known for the firmness of his convictions, the strong scriptural nature of his sermons, and his ability to compose parables which he used as illustrations.

'T.T.' (Thomas Todhunter) was converted at the age of 17. Those who knew him in his later days will find the following hard to believe, but he declared that he was very shy by nature and experienced a battle in overcoming his self-consciousness. Nevertheless, he taught a Sunday School class of teenage girls and at times substituted for his father in the pulpit. By the time he was 21 'T.T.' was pastor of a small Baptist church. Like C. H. Spurgeon and Dr. Lloyd-Jones, he had no seminary training, but he had learned much about the ministry from his father, and while in this first church and the others that followed he spent 15 hours a day in diligent study. He wrote out two sermons each week, choosing with great care every word and building the whole into a complete homiletical production. He developed a strong manner in the pulpit, steadily improved his voice till it became an organ of tremendous strength, and proved himself in almost every sense a true man of God and an exceptionally capable preacher. His ministry in each of these early churches was blessed with conversions and baptisms and, indeed, was marked by the divine presence in such fulness that the church experienced a rich and lasting growth. For instance, during his ministry in London, Ontario, both the building and the membership were more than doubled in size, and often the evening services were so large they had to be held in a nearby skating arena. In those days Pastor Russell, founder of the Jehovah's Witnesses, came to London and advertised very widely his sermon on 'To Hell and Back'. But 'T.T.' advertised still more widely that he would preach on 'To Hell and Stay' and even the large skating arena would not hold the congregation that came to hear that message.

The power of T.T.'s preaching, together with his ability as a pastor, brought him to the attention of Baptists throughout Canada, and in 1910, at the age of 37 he was called to the premier Baptist Church of the land, Jarvis Street, Toronto. Most of the deacons were either prominent lawyers or equally successful businessmen and several of the most noteworthy families of the city were

represented among its members. The Baptist denomination possessed its own institution for the training of men for the ministry, McMaster University, and the late Senator McMaster, its founder, had been a member of Jarvis Street. Likewise the majority of the faculty and governors were among its members and were also the chief officials of the denomination.

T.T. proved well-suited to this prominent association. He was tall — about six feet two or three — and carried himself with a dignified bearing. He was always immaculate in his attire and on Sundays he wore the cut-away coat, striped trousers and wing collar. His glasses were of the kind that are attached by a narrow black ribbon, and when he put these into place they seemed to give his gaze a scrutinising and penetrating quality. His preaching was admired by the majority of the congregation, for in general they were a spiritually-minded people, and the lawyers were intrigued by his reasoning abilities. He was a striking figure, a mighty piece of godly manhood and, as he expressed it himself, he was 'a very dignified pastor of a very dignified congregation'.

The people of Jarvis Street Church, however, were hardly ready for a man such as the powerful individual who now filled their pulpit. The two previous pastors, though faithful and gracious men, had not been particularly strong preachers nor forceful in their leadership. As a result the deacons had become the chief authority in the church and they largely dictated its policies. Under these circumstances the church had developed an unusually fine choir, led by a Doctor of Music, and it used up so much time with two and three anthems in the morning service that T.T. was left with little time to preach. But to him the preaching — the exposition of the Scriptures and the declaration of the gospel — was the all important part of the service and he refused to have his ministry curtailed for the sake of an anthem. He demanded that he — not the choir master — be in charge of the service, and this exercise of biblical principle on his part brought him into the severe dislike of many in both the choir and the congregation.

Moreover, among the younger generation in the church there was a growing tendency to worldliness and in 1918 a strong sermon by T.T. against worldly pleasures brought him into further disfavour. Nevertheless, throughout these years he exercised a powerful ministry and the congregations were the largest the church had ever known.

But despite the success of T.T.'s ministry vigorous efforts were made to remove him from the Jarvis Street pulpit. He called on all who believed in the type of ministry he exercised to be much in prayer and after three or four strongly contested business meetings, he was vindicated and those who had opposed him withdrew and formed a new church elsewhere.

From this point onward Jarvis Street grew with extraordinary rapidity. The Sunday School was reorganised and the attendance regularly reached 1,500 and

more. The services were always crowded and conversions and baptisms were constantly witnessed. During the 1920s the church was a power-house for God, with a visitation programme — conducted especially by Sunday School teachers — that reached numerous homes each week and a prayer life which saw the people gather three times a week for united intercession. The Saturday evening prayer meeting which began at 8 p.m. often could not be concluded before midnight or later, yet many of those in attendance were there again at 8 a.m. on the Sunday ready to partake of the early celebration of the Lord's Supper. These were days of great rejoicing and spiritual power.

Nevertheless, although Dr. Shields had thus won the battle within his own church, he soon faced another battle — this within the Baptist Convention. For some time he had been a member of the Board of Governors of McMaster University and by the early 1920s he was faced with the need to prevent modernism from taking over in its classes. In fact, throughout the preceding decade a professor who taught the Old Testament had been teaching the ideas of Higher Criticism and many a man who had come from his classes had gone into the ministry tinctured with this unbelief.

T.T's victory over his opposers in Jarvis Street increased the opposition against him in the Convention. Their actions came to a head in their endeavour to place in the Chair of Theology a minister from England, Professor Marshall. The Professor was an attractive personality and he professed to be sound in the faith. But certain students wrote down statements he made in the classroom and several people took note of things he said in his preaching in the churches, and it was plainly evident he did not believe the Scriptures.

Dr. Shield's vigorously contended against the retention of Professor Marshall. In his weekly paper, the *Gospel Witness*, he published statements exposing this modernism, and when Messengers from the Baptist Churches assembled for their Annual Convention he introduced the matter and endeavoured to get Marshall to answer questions as to his beliefs. The opposers responded by voting Dr. Shields and the Jarvis Street Baptist Church out of the Convention. Several other churches that were opposed to modernism thereupon also left the Convention and a new organisation, the Union of Regular Baptist Churches, was formed.

The action Dr. Shields had taken against unbelief with regard to McMaster University made him known throughout the English-speaking world as a mighty champion of the evangelical faith. He joined with other strong men in the leadership of a separatist organisation in the United States, the Baptist Bible Union. Meetings were held across the continent, informing people of the nature of modernism and of its presence in many churches and seminaries, and leading numerous churches and hosts of individuals to take a clear and separatist stand.

T.T. possessed a number of remarkable qualities. His personality could best be described as ponderous, and he was characterised by a strength of presence the like of which could be found in very few men in any walk of life. He was the kind of man who, if strangers saw him on the street, they would turn and look after he had passed, feeling something of the personal force that seemed to attend him. Nor was he unaware of his strength and he could be severely domineering and could prove bitter in his opposition. Yet he could also be magnificently winsome and charming, and all manner of needy persons who came to his attention received his unbounded kindness.

But it was in his preaching that T.T. was seen at his best. The Jarvis Street services were models of dignified worship — not dignified in the sense of formality, but rather in the feeling of the reality of the divine holiness. T.T. often read an entire hymn after announcing it, emphasising its truths and giving it definite meaning. His reading of Scripture was equally effective and often as he led in the pastoral prayer heaven seemed very near. His sermons were always an exposition of some verse of the Scripture, homiletically organised and leading through to a forceful conclusion. He possessed a wealth of illustration and his preaching was characterised by his very frequent quotations of Scripture. He referred freely to outstanding works of literature and since he had memorised a vast number of hymns he quoted from this stock of knowledge as he preached. In his sermons T.T. dealt with the great things of God, but he always endeavoured to present them in a manner that the ordinary man could understand. He could be tremendously forceful in his delivery and his voice could thunder till it seemed the whole building was shaking. But he could also speak in most captivating tones, soft and rich with pathos, and causing the entire congregation to hang upon every word.

Moreover, T.T. excelled as a preacher of the gospel. He made plain the basic truths of God's holiness and man's sinfulness, and redemption through the shed blood of Christ. He made an appeal for persons who desired to be saved, or who had received Christ and wished to confess that fact publicly, to come to the front of the church during the singing of the last hymn, and at each service, morning and evening, there were usually a number who responded.

The chief lesson for us to learn today is that of standing boldly against all that is contrary to the Scriptures, whether it be modernism, Romanism or the various cults. He led a separatist movement and the strength of the separatist Baptists in Canada and the United States today bears witness to the value of his unflinching example.

NEWS FROM SOUTH AFRICA

A record attendance is reported for the Annual Evangelical and Reformed Multi-racial Conference in South Africa where Geoff Thomas is the visiting preacher.

We Persuade Men

By Tom Nettles

How many believers are zealous to persuade others to believe the gospel? How many are skilful in doing so? How many excuse themselves and leave it to the 'professionals', that is to gospel preachers? And when we turn to the preachers, let us ask how many are powerful persuaders because they present the truth with both cogency and passion?

Is it not true that many deal only with the affections by telling stories that excite fear or emotion but fail to appeal to the mind. On the other hand, some so fear emotion that preaching becomes the mere dispensing of biblical information without any attempt to arouse concern in the hearer. They are faithful in study and clear and weighty in presentation, but somehow remain aloof from urgency, passion, and relevance.

While it is right to shun any appearance of 'walking in craftiness or adulterating the word of God' (2 Cor 4:2) we must never forget the fearful aspects of each man's appointment to stand before the judgment seat of Christ. Therefore, we must persuade men (2 Cor 5:10, 11).

When Agrippa perceived the aggressive and compelling presentation of Christian truth elaborated by Paul, he concluded that the apostle was concerned far more with persuading his hearers to embrace the gospel than he was with defending himself. When challenged, Paul frankly acknowledged that he sought to persuade not only Festus and Agrippa, but all who heard him that day. His purpose was that they should all become Christians.

Such should be our desire and for that we should labour. While we avoid all that is unbiblical and rightly reject practices that deny or contort gospel truth, we must be sure that the great apostle himself does not suffer from our censure. His attitude should be ours. His practice should be ours. We must follow the persuasive method of Paul and absorb his passion so that it permeates our efforts.

Pauline Persuasion

As Paul approached it, the human task in convincing a sinner of his sin rests on a biblical tripod. We must affirm that the gospel is, 1. true, 2. reasonable, and 3. biblical. The three elements of this presentation come from Paul's defence before Festus and Agrippa in Acts 26:24-29.

25. 'I am not insane most excellent Festus,' Paul replied. 'What I am saying is true and reasonable. 26. The king is familiar with these things, and I can speak freely with him. I am convinced that none of this has escaped his notice, because it was not done in a corner. 27. King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you do' (NIV).

This approach accomplishes two purposes. One, it shows that the gospel is entirely credible so that man's unbelief is imputed to his own hard-heartedness, not to any supposed irrationality of the gospel; two, it affirms that only God can convert the sinner's heart.

The Gospel is True

First, our preaching and persuasion insists upon the fact that the gospel is true. When his defense arouses the charge of insanity, Paul coolly maintains that his presentation of the work of Christ is *true*. He does not waver in the slightest. Paul's words and the historical reality correspond exactly with each other. He has not reported anything other than what actually has happened and can be verified by accepted historical methodology. His reminder to Agrippa that 'these things were not done in a corner' reinforces this point. This brief lapse into evidential apologetics must not be viewed as extraneous to gospel preaching. Paul had preached regeneration (18), justification by faith (18), genuine repentance (20), and the congruity of the work of Christ with the teaching of Scripture (22, 23). The mention of the resurrection shocked Festus to an intellectual protest which brought Paul's rejoinder that his teaching of Christ's suffering and resurrection was both true and reasonable. His response continues rather than interrupts his gospel argument.

Whenever Christian doctrine is preached, the proclaimer must be willing and ready to attest to its truthfulness. Virtually all doctrine is historical. The incarnation, the atonement, and the resurrection plus their peripheral implications are grounded firmly and have long roots into the soil of history. The claim to historical truthfulness naturally inheres in their proclamation. Consequently, one must at times drive home the historical evidence for these great events. Paul's defence is short, but pungent and irrefutable. 'The king knows about these matters, and I speak to him also with confidence, since I am persuaded that none of these things escape his notice; for this has not been done in a corner' (NASB). He follows then by linking these historical events inextricably with the witness of Scripture (27). This fabric of truth is then displayed before the antagonists in confidence that no more credible explanation for those facts can be given than that which he has presented. No matter how one translates Agrippa's response it is clear he has nothing to speak in refutation of Paul.

An expansion of this argument for truthfulness appears in 1 Corinthians 15. Paul mentions six specific appearances of Jesus and includes himself as an eyewitness of the resurrected Lord. Others, including most of the 500, were still alive and could be asked for verification of this claim of Paul. Clearly, Paul argued strongly for the historical reality of the gospel, its truthfulness, as an indispensable element of its presentation.

Jesus argued the same way. The event recorded in John 10:22-39 shows that Jesus rested the validity of his claims to divinity upon the observable historical evidence. We must bear in mind that these were unbelievers about whom Jesus said, 'You are not of my sheep'. Although he knew that many if not all of his opponents would remain unbelievers, he forced upon them the character of his

works, those things that could be seen with their own eyes, as evidence that he was from God.

The doctrine of effectual calling does not legitimate any refusal to give evidence of the truth claims of Christianity. In fact, the very exercise of giving evidence is an essential part of the gospel presentation, for this demonstrates that it is man's sinfulness, and not Christianity's obscurity that keeps a man from believing. This is exactly the point of John 3:19-20.

And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed (NASB).

So, indeed we must proclaim that Christianity is true, light has come into the world, and the evidence for it is so strong that all men would believe, if this belief came only through demonstrating the historical credibility of the facts. But much more than mere intellectual misinformation must be overcome. In reality, this demonstration of Christianity's truthfulness is a part of shutting the sinner up to the mercy of God (Jn 6:36-44).

When Paul, therefore, counters Festus's accusation of insanity with the reminder that, 'It is true', he demolishes an *ad hominem* (to the man) argument by pointing directly to the historical facts of his presentation. 'Say what you will about me, Festus, but you must face the reality that the point I am arguing is well documented.' Even Agrippa, who knows clearly the facts of this case will not deny that these claims have not to this point been refuted.

The Gospel is Reasonable

The second leg on which biblical persuasion stands is the assertion of its reasonableness. The word used (*sōphrosunēs* = reasonable) refers to conclusions drawn from deliberate and sober reflection. It carries the idea not only of rationality but of moral appropriateness. Paul is not primarily claiming that the gospel is the conclusion of a rationally coherent system (though that is true), but that the gospel contains nothing which, upon proper reflection, is unworthy of God or inappropriate for man. On the contrary, every part of the gospel maximizes both the divine glory and man's responsibility to worship God. The reasonableness of the gospel is assumed in Paul's question, 'Why is it considered incredible among you people if God does raise the dead?'

The law which undergirds the entire gospel is most reasonable. If God embodies all the perfections attributed to him in Scripture (and it would be most unreasonable for a deity to have less), then to love him with all the heart, mind, soul, and strength is the only appropriate response from a morally sensible creature. To focus primary affections on anything else would be infinitely blameworthy.

The punishment of sin set forth in the gospel magnifies both God's immutable holiness and man's importance. That punishment is eternal is most reasonable in light of the magnitude of the offence. That it admits of degrees shows the exactness of the justice involved and the precision with which God measures man's responsibility (cf. Heb 10:26-31 etc.).

The remedy provided for those to be redeemed is more in accord with reason than any other option. The redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ, is perfect man and perfect God, two distinct natures in one person. If man owes an eternal debt then it is only reasonable that man should pay it. But since it is eternal in nature, only God can pay it or endure the kind of wrath involved in such redemption. In addition, eternal salvation calls forth eternal gratitude, yea even eternal worship, toward the one effecting it. If we are redeemed by just a man, redemption thrusts upon us the necessity of idolatry unless the redeemer is God. Therefore, there is no way to surpass in excellence the kind of redeemer that the Bible describes Jesus Christ to be (cf. 1 Cor 15:21, 22; 1 Jn 5:20).

No one can conceive of a more excellent salvation than that set forth in Scripture. Immediate justification through imputed righteousness and gradual sanctification resulting in an immutable holiness meets every moral requirement of God's nature and man's nature. The regeneration effected by the Holy Spirit giving rise to repentance of sin and faith in Jesus Christ is suited both to the needs of our sinful natures and the persevering attitude of confession and love we must have toward God.

No one can conceive of a more excellent purpose in the entire process than that inherent in the gospel. If the triune God is the excellent being Scripture proclaims him to be, then it is perfectly reasonable that everything should be done to the praise of his glory (Eph 1:1-14).

Bodily resurrection and final judgment complete most reasonably the need for wholeness and justice inherent within each individual and society. Every person will stand before the final and omniscient judge and no one will have any gnawing frustration that injustice has had the final victory.

The claim for reasonableness does not assert that one could produce these Christian doctrines without divine revelation. It asserts that once these doctrines are known, we find them to answer the most far-reaching demands of sober and exalted reason. 'Why should any of you think it incredible that God raises the dead?'

Again, the gospel itself thrusts one into the arena of establishing the reasonableness of the Christian faith. One has not departed from his primary task if engaged in such an enterprise, for it is a constituent part of gospel persuasion.

The Gospel is Biblical

The third leg of our persuasive tripod insists that all the content of the gospel arises from the Bible, the book of divine revelation. Every fact of the gospel is

historically true and must be proclaimed and defended as such; but the coherence and meaning of those facts is a matter of divine revelation. The gospel system is satisfying philosophically and commends itself well to sober reason; but it is not merely a philosophical system susceptible to disintegration at the hands of the next shrewd sophist. To the Corinthians it was not the enticing words of man's wisdom that Paul preached, but Christ and him crucified. Acts 18:11 says it this way: 'And he settled there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.' The preaching of Christ and him crucified was no different than teaching the word of God. This same thought dominates Paul's presentation to Festus and Agrippa when he claims that his ministry of preaching and teaching has consisted of 'stating nothing but what the Prophets and Moses said was going to take place' (Acts 26:22). He reasserts this truth when he asks Agrippa, 'Do you believe the prophets? I know that you do.'

From beginning to end, the biblical persuader must be sure that his hearers know that his message is biblical. A man does not speak on his own authority, but on the authority of divine revelation. This approach accomplishes several important objectives. The hearer is led to see that if one is to receive the Bible as true at all, he must at the same time receive this gospel as true; for the gospel is the theme of the Bible and the key that unlocks the true intent of every book in it. Next, the hearer sees that to receive the gospel also means to bend to the authority of God as revealed in Scripture. Neither the personal forcefulness of the speaker nor the individual whims of the hearer can serve as an authority as to what constitutes a saving response to Christ. Only the gospel of the Scriptures is the power of God unto salvation (cf. Rom 1:16, 17; 1 Cor 15:1-4; Gal 1:6-9). Third, while the immediate means of regeneration is the direct action of the Holy Spirit upon the spirit of man, this regeneration, in its initial manifestation, often takes the form (if not always) of response to biblical truth. The imperishable seed of 1 Peter 1:23 is the Holy Spirit; the means through which the Spirit works is the word of God (cf. Rom 10:13-17). The persuader displays his confidence in God's sovereign purposes in redemption as manifest in the mysterious movement of the Spirit of God by his determination to preach only the Bible.

Some may now say, 'But your last point negates the force of the first two points'. I say, 'No. The last point is that which necessarily involves us in the first two'. If we preach the gospel as the apostles did and as it is presented in the Bible, then we already are embarked upon a voyage of demonstrating both the truthfulness and the reasonableness of Christian claims.

Someone else may say, 'But Paul explicitly denounces using methods of persuasion in 1 Corinthians 1:4'. True, he renounced the use of the subtle and deceitful methods of the sophists and cynics of his day, but he nevertheless used what he was convinced was the godly method of persuading men. In Corinth, according to Acts 18:4, Paul 'was reasoning in the synagogue every Sabbath and

(concluded on page 21)

Spiritual Discernment – A Christian Duty

The clear implication of 1 Corinthians 2:15 is not only that we possess the means by which we can 'discern all things' but also that we *must* constantly and deliberately *do so*! This verse declares: 'He that is spiritual judgeth all things.'

Modern evangelical Christianity has been paralysed increasingly by the idea that any critical analysis of a religious activity displays a lack of Christian love. We are told that it is incompatible with the sanctified and gracious portrait of a believer drawn in the New Testament. To this we must reply that true love is always realistic. True love never shirks disconcerting facts. God is love – infinite and eternal love – but who, if we may assert it with reverence, is more realistic than God? He commends what is righteous. He condemns what is wicked and dangerous. Mere sentimental traditionalism has led to the flabby, insipid evangelicalism of today in which maturity and strength of character is rarely seen. We use the religious jargon of our forefathers without the reality and power they enjoyed. We should analyse and examine ourselves in this respect. In doing this we need not be harsh or coldly intellectual. The Christian faith is balanced. It is both negative and positive. It is both firm and loving. Grace and discipline combine to form a harmony in the character of the Christian.

The necessity for discernment as we evaluate ourselves and modern Christianity should become clear as we note the following points.

1. Discernment is a logical necessity

In every sphere of life men separate and grade. Take business or farming as

examples. It would be a sure sign of incompetence, if not ineptitude, if a farmer or businessman accepted all products as equally good. The farmer is constantly grading his fruit into different sizes and qualities. The businessman sells his products at different prices. Why? Because again the quality differs. The whole of life is one long and constant process of sorting, analysing and classifying.

If discernment is important in the material realm, how much more in the spiritual? Is all then 'gold, silver, precious stones' and nothing 'wood, hay, stubble'? Since sin, Satan, and the flesh are still much with us, dare we do less than habitually demand scrupulous examination of ourselves and our motives, and also examine the religious activities of our day?

Spiritual discernment is to a considerable extent the extension of our normal critical faculties into the spiritual realm. Our spiritual welfare is dependent upon our faculty to discern – 'He that is spiritual judgeth all things'.

2. Discernment is necessary as we read the Scriptures

We are required to discern between the righteous and the unrighteous whenever we read the Scriptures. Beginning with Adam we follow the line of the righteous through Seth, Enoch, Methuselah, Lamech and Noah. From Noah we take it up through Shem to Abraham. It then continues through Isaac, Jacob, and ultimately into the broad stream of Israel as a people. All along, however, there are spiritual casualties such as Cain and Esau.

The Psalms take up this theme, drawing an unmistakably clear line between the

righteous and unrighteous. The first psalm illustrates this point with its sustained contrast between the godly and ungodly. Likewise the book of Proverbs contrasts the wise and the foolish; the saint with the sinner; the just with the wicked.

Many of our Lord's parables illustrate the ultimate division of all men and their activities. Examine such parables as the Wheat and the Tares; the Rich Man and Lazarus; the Drag-Net; the Two Sons; the Five Foolish and Five Wise Virgins; the Pharisee and the Publican. Or look at the vivid description of the separation of the sheep from the goats in Matthew 25. Reading and exposition of Scripture involves the exercise and development of our faculty to discern.

3. Church History emphasises the need for discernment

The history of the Christian Church is marked with examples of the subtle growth of some heresy that originally seemed quite harmless but, ultimately, had well-nigh fatal consequences for the life of the Church. The necessary discernment to detect the danger was missing.

Take, for example, the growth of monasticism. This was originally considered as the ideal of the Christian life. Monks and nuns were automatically thought of as possessing greater piety than those who still lived in the world. History, however, has taught us that no walls are high enough to keep out covetousness and lust.

Or recall the famous Crusades to deliver the Holy Land from the hands of Moslems and Saracens. For over two hundred years it was applauded. Many outrages were perpetrated in the name of Christ. Death in this holy cause was supposed to secure salvation! What could be more pathetic than the

'Children's Crusade'? Longfellow aptly describes it:

*'Ah! what master hand shall paint
How they journeyed on their way,
How the days grew long and dreary,
How their little feet grew weary,
How their little hearts grew faint!'*

Here, then, was a tremendous effort looked upon as well-pleasing to God and full of merit for the partaker. But where was the voice raised to point out that the whole thing was satanic?

Modern evangelical Christianity, unfortunately, has displayed a deplorable lack of discernment. Some churches employ methods borrowed from the world as they engage in entertainment evangelism without weighing the effects that will ultimately result. Other churches continue with dead formalistic traditionalism failing to discern that legitimate scriptural reforms are urgently needed and that evangelistic endeavour is imperative.

4. The remains of the old nature necessitate discernment

We forget that it is not natural for us to think spiritually. As sinners, we think emotionally and tend to be governed by principles of worldly expediency. Hence the need to be on our guard and not allow the old, degenerate, carnal principles of thought to play any part in our Christian lives. The old nature remains within the gates, a traitor cunningly disguised and at times hard to recognise. In making decisions we should search our motives. In judging others we should beware of jealousy. In other words discernment is required in regard to our own attitudes. 'He that is spiritual judgeth all things.'

5. The person and work of Satan demand discernment

Paul's warning is clear: 'And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an

angel of light' (2 Cor 11:14). Satan's aim is to destroy God's work. Deception is part of his strategy. Concealment is vital to his purpose.

In the waters of the Southern Pacific divers have discovered a remarkable fish called the 'cleanner wrasse'. Stationing themselves around and in coral reefs and sunken vessels they perform the role of underwater 'doctor' to myriads of fish that actually come to them. Using their teeth, and with unique immunity, they groom and clean other fishes of parasites, damaged tissues, sores, or swellings. Many ichthyologists feel that these slim blue-and-black wrasses and other similar cleaners may hold the key to the health of much underwater life in the world's oceans. They perform a most vital task of healing and maintaining many species which might otherwise perish.

The history of the Christian Church is marked with examples of the subtle growth of some heresy that originally seemed quite harmless but, ultimately, had well-nigh fatal consequences for the life of the Church. The necessary discernment to detect the danger was missing.

But this is not the end of the story. Also found in these waters is a cruel mimic, a sabre-toothed 'blenny'. This fish not only duplicates the real 'doctors' colouring but even imitates its distinct approach to the patients. Once within striking distance, however, it drops all pretence and attacks viciously. Adult fish can usually spot the intruder and chase it away. Juveniles only learn from painful experience to distinguish the licensed practitioner from the quack.

Satan's methods are much like that of the vicious yet disguised blenny. For centuries Satan has waylaid God's people, imitating the real gospel and causing untold misery and suffering. Much of this could have been avoided had we had the spiritual maturity and discernment to see through his initial approach.

Satan is still with us. He is still at work deceiving the undiscerning. He is still 'going to and fro in the earth' (Job 1:7).

6. Finally, the modern situation calls for discernment

One is always struck by the wonderful simplicity of the New Testament Church and Christians alike. Uncomplicated in structure, belief and evangelical practice, the Christian message spread with astonishing rapidity and sublime power.

Turning to the modern scene, we are struck by the contrast. We are confronted on every hand by movements and organisations. There is a bewildering mass of ecclesiastical structures and machinery. Committees are like mushrooms for multitude. Moreover channels of communicating the gospel have multiplied: television, radio, films, records, tape-recordings and literature of every description clamour for attention. Discernment is needed to sort out one's priorities and to test the real validity or worth of some of the media at our disposal especially since quantity seems to prevail over quality and the real power of the Holy Spirit to convince of sin is missing.

In conclusion we may say that the exercise of judgement is desperately needed in order that by the grace of God we may make the most of our short, uncertain lives. When we draw near the end of life's journey may we not be filled with regret that we failed in this vital matter of discernment?

As Christians we are often content to condemn the evils in society around us, without doing anything either to combat them or to alleviate the need that often gives rise to them. This past few months there has been a great deal of media attention given first to the Warnock Report, and then to Enoch Powell's Unborn Children (Protection) Bill, which won a large majority (238 v 66) in February during its second reading. This bill was not to do with abortion as such; but the principle of whether or not the human embryo should be protected by law is of fundamental importance. An increasing number of evangelicals are becoming involved in finding out more about the issues involved. We are grateful to Dr John R. Ling, Co-organiser of Evangelicals for LIFE for this contribution.

Evangelicals for LIFE

The British are being increasingly unkind to animals. During the first quarter of 1985, over 16,000 cases of such cruelty were reported to the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. This is dismal news. But did you know that during the same period, some 40,000 unborn children were not just cruelly treated in England and Wales, but actually killed? Yes, it's shamefully true; there are more than 160,000 abortions performed here each year, in the towns and cities where we live. That's one life violently ended every minute of every working hour of every working week. How can the horror of all this be conveyed? At times it is almost impossible to comprehend. The favourite time for abortion is when the unborn child is 9-12 weeks old. Such a child would fit snugly into the palm of your hand; he moves, swallows, digests, sucks his thumb and feels pain. Here is no blob of jelly or a non-human being or a human non-being. From day one of conception, he has been a unique, developing child — you and I started just like that.

So what sort of society purposefully puts to death its own silent offspring? And what sort of people even claim there is virtue in such an act? An unjust one, an ungodly, dark and unsavoury one. Certainly one that has long forgotten

the scriptural truths that each human being is made and known by the infinite, personal God. Our utilitarian age pays little attention to the biblical arguments for personal worth and dignity. How are we to reclaim these foundational truths of Genesis and the rest of the Book and apply them to abortion and its related issues? Evangelicals for LIFE was formed specifically to help Biblical Christians do just that.

First, a little history. On 27 October 1967, the Abortion Act passed through the British Parliament, six months later it became the law of the land. Whatever the high-minded intentions of its proposers, the Act has allowed virtual abortion on demand in England, Scotland and Wales ever since. Within the following two years, the LIFE organisation was founded with its three-fold aims:

- i. to educate people about the true nature of abortion and its consequences;
- ii. to help all women avoid abortion by offering free pregnancy testing, counselling and practical support and care;
- iii. to campaign for the repeal of the 1967 Abortion Act.

There are now 260 local LIFE Groups throughout the U.K., 60 LIFE houses

accommodating pregnant women and 110 offices providing help and care. Last year, LIFE received more than 50,000 calls for help. Central government provides no funding — there are no salaried officers — all this good work is done voluntarily.

For the first ten years of its existence, LIFE was not, with a few notable exceptions, helped by evangelicals. We were disinterested or busy or silent or something. Whatever it was, evangelicals did not see the issues. And this was in spite of the fact that the Biblical Christian is the one person in society with the knowledge that from conception, we are all made in the likeness of our Creator and therefore precious and with intrinsic worth. And the Biblical Christian is the one person with the mind and compassion of Christ to go that second mile. Therefore, the believer, with the Scriptures in hand and the love of Christ in heart, should have been in the vanguard saying 'No' to abortion and doing all possible to help women avoid its horrors. But the believers were not there — that is a sad blot on the history of evangelicalism in our land.

It is therefore with some joy I can now report that things have been slowly changing. The 'Whatever Happened to the Human Race?' project by the late Francis Schaeffer and C. Everett Koop has played a considerable part in this turnaround. The book of the same name (Marshalls, £1.95) is probably still the best available treatment of abortion and the associated problems of infanticide and euthanasia. In addition, the evangelical press, from *Buzz* to the Banner of Truth, has begun to bring abortion to the attention of its readers. There are now several U.K.-produced booklets that deal with various aspects of abortion from an evangelical perspective — these are all on sale from LIFE Central Office at Leamington Spa.

So up until the 1980's, the membership of LIFE was largely devoid of evangelicals. Then we started joining. And in 1982, Evangelicals for LIFE was formed as a specialist grouping within and under the aegis of the main organisation. It is not actually possible to join Evangelicals for LIFE — you can only join LIFE, either as a national, but preferably as a local member of your nearest LIFE Group; then you can be added to the Evangelicals for LIFE mailing list. The aims of Evangelicals for LIFE are:

- i. to present the biblical case against abortion;
- ii. to educate and persuade the evangelical community to take a clear stand against abortion;
- iii. to encourage evangelicals to get involved with LIFE;
- iv. to foster these aims by organising and promoting conferences, speakers, articles, leaflets, books and films.

Hence the *raison d'être* of Evangelicals for LIFE is to get Bible believers working within the local Groups and organisation of LIFE. Many, it is true, were — and some still are — reluctant to join an association like LIFE that is not thoroughly church-based and Biblical. Some believers have found it difficult existing in the environment of the few Roman Catholic dominated local LIFE Groups. Qualms about raffles and tombolas as means of raising money to keep the local Groups viable are occasionally produced. But what are the alternatives? Ignore the abortion problem and forget the unborn child? The answer is to recruit more members from your local fellowship into your LIFE Group and explain your reservations concerning finances and covenant instead! Within any LIFE Group you will find cobelligerents from all walks of life — it will be an eye-opener for many.

The input from evangelicals during the past three years has been significant — it has been one of the major growth areas of LIFE. At the last meeting of Central Committee, the national policy making body, evangelicals sat either side of me; I had not met either before. A pleasing number of believers now chair or hold office in LIFE Groups. Many are becoming increasingly involved in the pregnancy care services. Christians' homes are being opened to needy pregnant mums and many hundreds of our folk are busy in lots of other LIFE activities. We have been given every encouragement to operate within LIFE; we have surrendered no principle nor set aside any conviction. The challenge is out — Evangelicals for LIFE will make it easier and more hospitable for you to work in the pro-life cause.

The great need among evangelical fellowships is still for education. What do the Scriptures say concerning abortion? When does human life begin? What does the Warnock Report mean? How can we care for the mother and her unborn child? Evangelicals for LIFE can help your fellowship tackle these and other questions. We now have a considerable number of well-informed speakers throughout the U.K. We are

willing to come and speak, perhaps show a film and bring literature to aid you. For more information, including a copy of the latest *Newsletter*, write to Evangelicals for LIFE, 118-120 Warwick Street, Leamington Spa, Warks CV32 4QY.

Recommended literature

Let Them Live! (1985), Huw Morgan, Evangelical Press, 27 pp., 60p.

Dr Huw Morgan is the medical adviser for Evangelicals for LIFE. He presents a readable analysis of several problems that modern science has raised — test-tube babies, antenatal screening, infanticide, contraception and abortion are covered from a biblical viewpoint. The final chapter includes sub-sections on proclaiming truth, practising compassion and improving laws: the very aims of Evangelicals for LIFE.

Abortion and the Christian, John Jefferson Davis, Pres. and Ref. 125pp., £4.60.

Open Your Mouth for the Dumb (1984), Peter Barnes, Banner of Truth Trust, 32 pp., 60p.

Abortion — the Biblical and Medical Challenges (1983), Gordon Wenham and Richard Winter, CARE Trust, 19pp. 40p.

We Persuade Men *continued from page 15*

trying to persuade Jews and Greeks' (NASB). His preaching of Christ crucified, therefore, included a reasoned method of persuasion. And this revealed, reasonable, historical message took possession of the Corinthians under the ultimately persuasive power of the Holy Spirit.

There is a last observation to make which relates to the questions asked at the beginning. It is evident that Paul was not only persuasive by means of the content of what he said, but his earnestness was apparent in his manner. This, as well as the power of what he said, brought the charge of insanity from Festus. We must not be afraid of passion.

May God bless his Church today with biblical persuaders; and may their persuasion be anointed by the quickening power of the Holy Spirit.

The Ten Commandments and our Sanctification

The Ten Commandments have a profound influence in the lives of believers. Not only are the commandments used to bring about a conviction of sin before conversion but as we see from the central passage of Scripture on this subject, namely Romans chapter 7, the commandments are essential in the progressive sanctification of Christians.

In our day there has been a widespread denial of the relevance of the Ten Commandments. The idea has been spread that these commandments were for the Jews and belonged to an ancient legislative system which now has little bearing for us today. It has also been suggested that you cannot separate the Ten Commandments from the Jewish ceremonial and civil laws.

Before we come to the subject of sanctification in particular it is necessary to establish the foremost importance of the Ten Commandments under separate headings.

1. The Ten Commandments are unique and separate

If there was ever a time when God stressed something to be special and important it was when he gave Israel the Ten Commandments. Let us recall those actions which pointed to the unique nature of the Decalogue or the Ten Words.

First of all Jehovah made Mount Sinai his throne and surrounded it with thunder, lightning, a thick cloud and an impenetrable darkness. All this was accompanied with a very loud trumpet blast (Ex 19:16). The whole mountain trembled and the smoke billowed from it as it does from a furnace. Then the LORD spoke face to face to the people out of the fire from the mountain (Deut 5:4). This speech was not in a whisper but with a very loud voice to the whole assembly. This event was quite unique. Has any other nation heard the voice of God speaking out of a fire? (Deut 4:33). The most important of all events in history was the coming into this world of Jesus Christ, yet by comparison with Sinai his coming was silent. It was not heralded with trumpets and certainly was made no great public event.

Enough has been said to prove that God intended us to note the special nature of the Decalogue. To confirm it all he himself did something further which was quite unique. He wrote these laws on two stone tablets. The two tablets were identical and were engraved on both sides by the fingers of the LORD. And then as if to emphasise once more the separate and special nature of the Decalogue the two tablets, one for the people and one for the LORD by deed of covenant,

were placed inside the Ark. This Ark was covered with a solid gold top to which were fixed two cherubim of the glory. This gold top was called the mercy seat or literally the place of propitiation (Heb 9:5). This represented God's throne, the place from which he could dispense mercy, because Christ himself has satisfied the demands of the moral law. Having fulfilled all those demands he can now justly forgive those who trust in him.

Why is it that the LORD did so much to stress the unique nature of the Decalogue? The answer must surely be that these commandments reflect the holy character of our Triune God.

2. The Ten Commandments reflect the holy character of God

The number ten reminds us of fullness, and when we study the Decalogue we see that every aspect of morality is included. We see this positively because we cannot improve on the command to love God with all our hearts and our neighbours as ourselves. If we love God with all our minds and hearts it follows that we will not transgress his commands. We note too that the commands concerning our Creator come first, and then those commands which relate to each other follow in logical order. Godliness will always lead to righteousness with regard to our neighbour. Likewise ungodliness will lead to unrighteousness (Rom 1:18).

It is evident that by its very nature the Decalogue is a reflection of the nature of God because it tells us of his love for righteousness and his hatred of iniquity. The Ten Commandments define exactly what sin is. Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact sin is lawlessness (1 Jn 3:4). Since his law reflects his majesty and holiness and purity, to sin is to attack or assault the very nature of God.

Also to be observed is the unity of God's law because if you break one command, you break them all (Jam 2:10). James, in referring specifically to the Decalogue, calls it 'the royal law'. It is the law of our King. If you put a crack into one of those stone tablets that crack will run right through the whole tablet so that it falls apart. Similarly if one precept is broken it leads to transgression of other parts of God's law. To break one part is effectively to break the whole.

We see that the Decalogue reflects the holy character of God in that life itself is sacred (Commandment 6), as marriage is sacred (Commandment 7), as property ownership is sacred (Commandment 8), as truth is sacred (Commandment 9). That all these things which are holy in God's eyes should be observed from the very depths of the heart is proven by the tenth commandment, you shall not covet, which means that you shall not have evil desires. This reminds us of Jesus and his exposition of some of these commandments in which he proves that all the commandments apply to the hearts of men and point to the evils that spring from fallen hearts (Mt 5:17-30, 15:19).

3. The Ten Commandments transcend time

As the holy character of God is unchanging, so the nature of sin is unchanging. Lying, cheating, adultery or murder are the same in the Garden of Eden as they are today. We know that all desire for sin will be entirely removed so that there will be no transgressions in heaven, but nevertheless were a transgression to be committed in heaven, it would be a transgression of the moral law because sin is the transgression of the moral law. That principle is unchanging.

The New Jerusalem and the world of glory to come will eternally and permanently demonstrate God's great love of righteousness because righteousness will reign there. Likewise hell will permanently and eternally exhibit the fact of God's hatred of transgression and all that does violence to the expression of his holy character.

We can see that while the moral law transcends time and will always be a reflection of God, the ceremonial law was temporary. The ceremonial law with sacrifices and priests and a tabernacle was set up to point sinners to the way of salvation. Those who had transgressed the Decalogue could find the justification which God provides through the ministry demonstrated by the ceremonial law. All this ceremonial law found its fulfilment in the person and work of Jesus Christ. The old patterns, types and shadows contained in the ceremonial law can serve as illustrations and they can help us to understand the grandeur and glory of Christ's work for us, but essentially the ceremonial law is something of the past.

Likewise the civil law given to the Jews was based upon the Ten Commandments. Of course, I do not deny the connection between the civil law and the moral law, or the connection between the ceremonial law and the Decalogue, but insist on the way in which these are clearly distinguished for us by the way they are expressed in Scripture.

Every civil administration should base its laws on the Ten Commandments. It is not possible for any government to enforce the first four commandments, but certainly commandments 5 to 9 are imperative while the rest are highly relevant for wisdom and observation. No civil administration today is required to follow the theocracy which pertained to Israel, because that was unique. That too has passed away completely and now every nation should base its own administration upon a wise observation and application of the Decalogue.

To sum up then, the ceremonial law, while it has much to teach us, has been fulfilled and completed. The Jewish civil law, while it also has much to teach us has become part of history, whereas the Decalogue transcends time and must by its very nature always and eternally reflect the holy character of God.

4. The Ten Commandments correspond with the consciences of men

Written in the heart of every human being is what we call natural law. This is the law of the conscience. Paul tells us, 'Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the

law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them' (Rom 2:14, 15).

We should note that it is specifically the moral law that is being referred to when it comes to convicting men's consciences. Thus when our Lord spoke to the rich young ruler he referred to the commandments. We have just seen that James does the same, and again Paul refers in Romans to the Decalogue specifically, especially to the tenth commandment (Rom 7).

Sometimes the word 'Law' is used in Scripture to describe the whole Mosaic system of law (Jn 1:17, Gal 3:10, 23). Sometimes the word 'Law' refers to the Bible as a whole with all its promises and precepts (see Pss 19 and 119).

We can use the whole Bible to appeal to the consciences of men or we can appeal to the consciences of men with the gospel. All these things we may do, but effectively if men are to be convinced of sin, righteousness and judgement to come, they must know the meaning and horror of transgression as being sin against a holy God.

While we know that the consciences of men can be dreadfully seared and hardened and rendered ineffective, nevertheless we also know that all men are born with a natural law, or conscience, which corresponds exactly to the Decalogue. While sinners may strive to suppress the calls and alarms in their consciences when they hear the proclamation of the law, nevertheless we must never underestimate the power that lies in those calls.

We should never set up the Law and the gospel against each other. The one is a complete complement of the other. They are twin pillars in the temple of God. In Charles Bridges' book there is a quote in Latin. The author is not named. It reads, '*Qui scit bene distinguere inter Legem et Evangelium, Deo gratias agat, et sciat se esse Theologum*', which translated means, 'The man who is rightly able to distinguish between the Law and the Gospel, may thank God, and know himself to be a theologian'! (*The Christian Ministry*, Charles Bridges, B.O.T. 1967, p. 230.)

5. The Ten Commandments serve as a powerful guide for Christians to live by
It is a vast mistake to think that the Decalogue can be relegated to the ancient past. The relevance of God's moral law is as great now as it ever was, and as Paul shows in Romans 7 is a most powerful means of revealing the perfections that are required by a perfect God.

We should note that it is when our Lord has expounded on the searching nature of the commands of the moral law that he urges, 'Be perfect, therefore as your heavenly Father is perfect' (Matt 5:48).

Far from being less obligated to please God by heeding what he loves and avoiding what he hates, as is reflected in the Decalogue, we are under greater obligation.

Our union with Christ argues for a greater obligation to please God. If we are married to Christ, then like him we will honour our Father by observing carefully what he loves and what he hates, and by avoiding everything that offends the majesty and holiness of his character.

Also the new privilege of adoption whereby our Father comes into relationship of care and love for us, which is very intimate, means that we have to live to please him in every possible way.

Furthermore, the privilege of possessing the gift of the Holy Spirit whereby we enjoy his work and person as he indwells, guides and teaches us, means that we have an empowerment and ability which enables us to love God's law from the heart and to keep it.

When Paul says that he is wretched, it is because he feels the grievousness and distress of not living up to the perfection reflected in the Decalogue. Far from becoming enslaved or coming into bondage, he glories in the justification which undergirds the whole process of his progressive sanctification. When he says, 'Christ is the end of the law so that there might be righteousness for everyone who believes' (Rom 10:4), it means as far as the requirements of the law are concerned, that Christ has completed everything, and answered everything that the moral law could ever demand. We observe the moral law as Christians not in order to earn our salvation nor in order to contribute toward our justification, but we always obey the moral law as God's redeemed children, observing it in order to please him and to live in harmony with him and enjoy his love (Jn 14:23). That love of delight that the Father has for his children because they are obedient and loving towards each other is called 'complacent' love, a love of good pleasure, the same kind of love the Father has for the Son.

When we say that we keep the commands of Christ we include the new commandment, namely to love one another, as part of the larger commandment of loving God and men. Now the fulfilment of the ceremonial law by Christ and the satisfaction of all the requirements and demands of the moral law by him, obligate us more than ever to love as he loved and especially to have that unity and love with his own redeemed family.

It is useful to remember that the Mosaic law as a whole was one chapter in the covenant of grace. The Mosaic law was never given as a means by which the people were to earn their salvation by merit. There is an emphatic stress at the beginning of the Decalogue that it was because they had been redeemed from the slavery of Egypt that the law was given to them. The law came out of the grace of God. The commandments were given in order that the privileged

position of Israel could be maintained. The commandments confirmed the relationship to Yahweh. They also prohibited what might destroy that relationship. In other words it was not by law-keeping that the people were to come to salvation. They had already been redeemed as a people, and now the breaking of the law was forbidden lest their relationship with Yahweh should be destroyed. The two tables are called, 'the tablets of the covenant' (Deut 9:9) which calls attention to their covenantal character. It follows that because the law is embedded in divine covenant, the principle of personal devotion to God becomes the obvious fulfilment of the law. Conformity to the law is accomplished by the gracious work of the Holy Spirit and it is the work of the Holy Spirit to reveal just how much is required by the commandments.

To be more specific we need to see how each commandment provides a blaze of light as to how we can please Yahweh by loving him and honouring him and by fulfilling his will as it is reflected in his law. In this way we fulfil that exalted relationship of adoption to which we have been brought as his children (1 Jn 3:1, 2, Ps 103:13-18, Eph 1:5).

The Westminster Larger Catechism shows how exceedingly comprehensive each commandment is in its requirement. In the Sermon on the Mount our Lord shows how demanding the Law is as it relates to the heart of man. He refers, of course, particularly to the sixth and seventh commandments.

The second commandment is particularly comprehensive when it comes to making an application for the public worship of God. It certainly requires separate treatment, as does the fourth commandment upon which a huge volume of material has been written over the centuries. That the minds of God's people have been so exercised by the Ten Words bears testimony to their mighty power and decisiveness. The Decalogue does not give power. It sheds light. The Holy Spirit empowers, and union with Christ gives strength, and the blessing of adoption by the Father motivates love and obedience.

We ought always to have our minds and hearts open to the bright light of God's truth as it is expressed in those words which are uttered audibly to the people and transcribed into stone to show that these moral values can never pass away. Their primary use is to convince us of our need, and when we have found all that need satisfied by our Saviour, who satisfied all the demands of the moral law both in its requirements and in its penalties, we then continue to receive light and direction and guidance by the Ten Commandments of the living God.

Recommended books on Moral Law

Pattern for Life, Norman Shields, E.P.

Moral Law, E. F. Kevan.

God's Way of Holiness (chapter six), Horatius Bonar, E.P.

The True Bonds of Christian Freedom, Samuel Bolton, Banner.

The Ten Commandments, Thomas Watson, Banner.

The Grace of Law, E. F. Kevan, Baker.

Gospel Mystery of Sanctification, Walter Marshall, E.P.

First Things First, F. Catherwood, Lion.

Sermons on the Ten Commandments, J. Calvin, Baker.

No gospel in the Ecumenical Movement

The editorial and the first article of the last issue (R.T. 85) were devoted to a description of a major ecumenical event to take place in Liverpool, together with an account of a rally for evangelicals designed to unite evangelicals and highlight the gospel which has been lost by the ecumenical movement. The ecumenical event has taken place and is described in the editorial and illustrated by the photographs. Was the rally organised by the Merseyside Gospel Witness a success? What is planned for the future? What lessons have been learned for the future? Many of our readers have expressed their interest to know the answers to these questions. For them as well as for those who may be reading about this for the first time, resort will now be made to the question and answer method.

What is the ecumenical challenge in Liverpool?

The ecumenical movement in Liverpool has advanced further than in most other parts of Britain. This is due largely to the work of the Roman Catholic archbishop, Derek Worlock, and the Anglican bishop, David Sheppard. The aim is to have an organised unity with the title CALL TO PARTNERSHIP which is described in a 36 page document. On Whitsunday, 26th May, a covenant was signed by the leaders pledging closer unity. The youth festival of Mission England called CROSSFIRE had offered their co-operation by organising a large young people's event similar to Greenbelt (Gospel Rock, plus seminars), to take place over the same weekend. One of the seminar tutors was an R.C. bishop. 10,000 were expected, about 2,000 came. There was little support for the Whitsunday event, some observers called it 'backfire' instead of 'crossfire'!

What is the Merseyside Gospel Witness?

When it was realised that the ecumenical movement with its organizational expression CALL TO PARTNERSHIP, was claiming to represent all the churches ministers in the area recognised the necessity of preserving a voice for the gospel as well as the need for gospel churches to unite. The title Merseyside Gospel Witness was chosen as suitable to represent gospel churches. A rally was organised for 17th May. 560 attended of which 460 signed a pledge (care is being taken to be exact about numbers). 25 ministers signed a pledge of unity for their churches. Others indicated their support but said they would need to have the confirmation of their memberships before signing.

Since very little has been done in recent years to promote evangelical unity the encouragement derived from the rally was tremendous, especially since it was organised at short notice.

Internal local church unity and evangelism are priorities. Therefore there is little time to spend on interchurch unity. The time that has been spent on expressing gospel unity has been very rewarding and the blessings of Psalm 133 well and truly experienced by many.

What is planned by M.G.W. for the future?

The ecumenicals boast about the miracle of their unity. To achieve a visible expression of unity in the gospel as noted above is wonderful, but to achieve a visible expression of unity at the expense of the gospel is a disaster, not a miracle. David Sheppard mentions the gospel but we never hear it defined or preached by the ecumenical leaders. The sermon in the R.C. cathedral on Whitsunday was given by an arch-liberal (Dean Patey) and consisted of a ten-minute homily. The main point made was that we ought to impress the politicians with ecumenical unity.

In such a climate it is believed that we could do nothing better than have gospel preaching as the main expression of our unity. Accordingly John Blanchard has agreed to come and be the preacher at an evangelistic rally during October.

What mistakes have been made?

In retrospect we are most encouraged and there has been enthusiasm about the formation of the M.G.W. and its prospects in the future. The organisation of the rally on May 17th was excellent. A mistake that was made was my failure to be more specific as to what kind of separatists were not welcome at the rally. I am really sorry. There was genuine concern that the rally might be disrupted.

Specific prayer was made that there would not be any interference. We are happy to report that there were no unpleasant incidents.

We noted that the Protestants behaved well along the route on Whitsunday. They are dismissed by the ecumenicals as mere slogan hurlers. The Protestants (a better word than separatists) make a visual impact with their banners. Thus the press do take note of them, even if in a derogatory way.

What are the different kinds of separatists?

Since there was misunderstanding about the separatist issue, the above question requires an answer. A separatist is one who would not join a church if it is in a denomination, association, or affiliation with other churches which are modernistic. A secondary separatist is one who will not fellowship with anyone who has fellowship with someone who has compromised. When it comes down to it very few can consistently practice that position. An isolationist separatist is one who will have no fellowship at all with those outside his grouping (e.g. the Exclusive Brethren). A fighting or adversarial separatist is one who aggressively opposes any cooperation with those who are in mixed denominations even if those individuals are themselves courageously preaching the gospel and opposing apostasy. A friendly separatist is one who keeps himself clear of any public cooperation with those in mixed denominations, but nevertheless encourages unity and fellowship on a personal basis with non-separatists. It is obvious then that there are various shades of separatism.

What are the weaknesses of separatism?

The main weakness is to think in terms of guilt by association. For instance most evangelical ministers who have entered mixed denominations have done so in good faith. Many churches in mixed denominations maintain a high degree of independency. That is certainly true of churches in various Baptist unions or associations around the world. When there is a downgrade such as that in which Spurgeon was involved, the guilt is not one of association, but rather failure to proclaim the truth and contend for it! If other ministers go off the rails am I guilty because of that? Certainly not! Especially is a person not guilty if he is contending for the truth. We should be deeply thankful when ministers are clear and bold in their stand for the gospel. The time may come when their position is no longer tenable, but irrespective of the outcome we should rejoice whenever there is a bold and courageous declaration of the truth. We are all glad to own Martin Luther now, but how many of us would have encouraged him before 1520!

What are the dangers of independency?

This is not a digression because of the tendency for independents to ignore responsibility for the body of Christ as it is found abroad. Of course this issue should be solved on biblical grounds but it will be helpful to look at this question for a few moments. There are advantages with being independent and we would agree that every church should be self-governing. However if there is no association or bond with other churches there is no court of appeal when there is injustice or error, or special need of help. Also there is the tendency toward ineffectiveness, and sometimes pride among the ministers who suffer from isolation, and from a lack of having their thinking sharpened and their lives humbled by those more godly than themselves. Also it is rare for independent churches to accomplish much on their own when it comes to ministerial training and specialised missionary enterprise, whereas the united effort of many churches has often led to tremendous outreach.

Can we learn from parallel situations?

We can learn from battles both past and present. We should try and analyse the overall picture as well as understand the nature of the struggle going on in individual denominations or associations of churches.

Modernism is the main force which has destroyed evangelical denominations.

In American Presbyterian and Lutheran denominations the evangelicals have decided that they cannot win the battle against Modernism and have separated losing many of their resources in the process. Not all battles have been lost. In the 1920s the South African Baptists won the contest over

Modernism and Reformed Baptists now are content to be in the Union in which the present battle is over the Charismatic issue. The Charismatic churches now no longer resemble Baptist churches at all.

The massive Southern Baptist Convention is at present locked in a titanic struggle over Modernism. 45,000 have just attended the Convention in Dallas, Texas. The conservatives are determined to win and may well do so. They ask why they should hand over the property and resources they paid for to the Modernists.

What are the main lessons learned?

The outstanding lesson is that we need to take Christian unity seriously. The ecumenical movement must be given credit for observing that the unity prayed for by our Lord was a visible unity, and that he really meant what he said. The ecumenicals have lost sight of the fact that believers are united in salvation. The trend in our circles has been to think that withdrawal and separation is adequate. Time and time again in the history of the church it is a contest over error that results in a new and better expression of truth. A by-product of false ecumenism is genuine ecumenism. We need to avoid negative, defeatist or isolationist attitudes. One of the lessons learned is that there are excellent believers among the adversarial separatists who are prepared to see that no compromise is involved by using better means of communicating our beliefs. There is also a long and hard work to be done in persuading evangelicals to come right out of the false ecumenical alliance. Also we need to note well the difference between being in a mixed denomination and participation in the ecumenical movement. We have discovered ministers in mixed denominations who have nothing whatever to do with the ecumenical movement, who ignore it and who concentrate on their pastoral work. Obviously pressure is put upon them to conform. We should strengthen the morale of these fellow ministers and not disdain them.

We have learned that the ecumenical movement has compelled evangelicals both to clarify the gospel and proclaim it. For the life of them the ecumenical leaders cannot preach justification by faith. Their unity is based on a mental assent to the trinity and to baptism, the latter meaning whatever you want it to mean. Most of the free churchmen in the ecumenical movement are liberals who do not believe in God's wrath and eternal punishment or the absolute necessity of the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ as the propitiation. What a challenge for us to preach the whole counsel of God!

Yet a further lesson is that we should be far more vigorous in exposing the emptiness of this movement. Leaders should write personal letters to the ecumenical spokesmen and challenge them about their unbelief and inconsistency. These letters should be factually accurate and well reasoned. We should seek to have them published in the secular or religious press. An example of a letter to the one time evangelical David Sheppard is printed on page 31. We should aim to inform the public of the fraudulent nature of false ecumenism and endeavour at the same time to spell out the gospel message. When our letters are published let us make sure that other papers, magazines and journals have copies.

Especially should we concentrate on the truth of justification by faith. The ecumenists and the press take notice of the Protestants because they make a visual and audible impact, but they dismiss all their efforts as 'sloganising'. Their attitude is that it is worthless to take any notice of empty, meaningless slogans. However carefully chosen the slogans are, they are still dismissed. Well reasoned letters with factual content can be dismissed by the recipients, but if they have a wide coverage in print they will help unmask the utter emptiness and spiritual bankruptcy of this union which includes not only those who trust in works for salvation but many who deny the authority of Scripture. Ask the leaders what they do believe. Question them why they never expound the gospel.

Since they cannot tell us what the gospel is we should tell them how a man can be justified without works before a holy God. We need to tell them that salvation consists of repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and of the necessity to be born again.

Cassettes of the Rally are available.

1. A serious national situation — what can we do? By David Samuel.
2. Justification by faith — the basis of Christian unity. By Erroll Hulse.

These cassettes cost £1.85 each including postage. Write to Carey Recording Studios, 361 Aigburth Road, LIVERPOOL L17 0BP.

A letter to the bishop

Dear Bishop Sheppard,

I am writing to you for two reasons. The first is to express deep concern about the implications of your passion for Ecumenical Unity, especially with the Roman Catholic Church. With the majority I appreciate that it is always desirable to have love instead of hatred, friendship instead of violence. However it is also possible to have love and friendship on the basis of mutual agreement that we represent two different systems. ARCIC II to some extent shows the incompatibility of the two systems but talks around rather than directly to the impasse that exists over transubstantiation and the utter centrality of the mass as seen in many statements by Pope John Paul II in the book *The Bread of Life* ('The Eucharist contains the Church's entire spiritual wealth', p. 56, quoting the 2nd Vatican Council).

In your desire for unity you have moved away from the convictions you once held, and now your position contrasts greatly with your days in London at the Mayflower and also with the gospel and biblical robustness of the first bishop of Liverpool, whose position is represented by churches of the Merseyside Gospel Witness.

This leads me to my second reason for writing and that is our embarrassment that you seem determined to ignore the evan-

gelical churches of Merseyside. On Radio Merseyside you claimed that 'all the churches' supported the CALL TO PARTNERSHIP. Michael Wolfe informed you about our rally and you surely knew that we issued press releases to the secular and religious press explaining clearly that we are not Cultural Protesters but evangelical churches. You surely know that yet insist that 'all the churches' support the CALL TO PARTNERSHIP.

We are preparing a complete factual record with photographs to circulate to editors of significant journals and magazines at home and abroad. What are we to say about your claim? Are we to accuse you of terminological inexactitudes? — or confusion? — or that you meant representatives of all the churches but not ALL the churches? You surely know that the best attended churches in Toxteth have no enthusiasm whatever for the Ecumenical Movement. It is distressing that we have to draw attention to the vast contrast between the first Pentecost when the Gospel was sounded out by Peter in the clearest way, and the dreadful political homily by Dean Patey in the R.C. Cathedral which had no saving content whatsoever.

Since this will be a public letter we invite a response from you.

Yours sincerely,

Erroll Hulse, *editor*.

A reply from the Bishop of Liverpool

Dear Mr. Hulse,

Thank you for your letter. May I first take up your complaint that I have talked about 'all the Churches'. I have no wish at all to be discourteous to my brothers and sisters in the independent Churches, who do not feel it right to involve themselves in ecumenical partnership. I hope you will understand the problem of finding appropriate words, when short comments or statements have to be made. If I may say so, your letter includes a parallel phrase. You say that I seem determined to ignore the Evangelical Churches of Merseyside. Such a phrase suggests that all the Evangelical Churches of Merseyside take the position that you do. In fact a very great many Evangelical Churches are part of the 'mainline' Christian denominations. You will understand that many Christians prefer to use the word 'Churches' rather than denominations.

I think it might be less courteous than more, if, every time I was asked questions about the positions of the Churches in Merseyside, I made a disclaimer about the independent Churches. I will certainly try to find a way of doing that, but I hope you will understand the real difficulty in brief interviews of doing that on every occasion. For example, I think that some of the Churches to which you refer are Baptist Churches which do not belong to the Baptist Union. Explaining that would make the attempt to make some straightforward statement in public rather complex.

The first point which you make sets out your disagreement with me about partnership with the Roman Catholic Church. You tell me that I have moved away from the convictions I once held and that my position contrasts greatly with my days in London at The Mayflower. I think I should probably be the best judge of what my position was when I was at The Mayflower. As it happens, my book, *Built as a City*, which I wrote fairly soon after I left The Mayflower, and which represents a great deal of my thinking when I was there, is about to be re-published. When I read

through the text, I did not feel that I wanted to change anything. I say this because Christians are sometimes guilty of putting labels on other people and assuming that they know precisely what goes with the label. If being a Bishop, and ministering to such a wide range of Churches, has taught me anything, it has been that party labels do not tell you anything like the whole truth about the Christian position which someone holds.

I am quite clear that there are matters of real importance about which Anglicans and Roman Catholics disagree. It would be all too easy to concentrate on the disagreements, without noticing the great central truths of the faith which we hold in common. The relationship I have with Archbishop Worlock and with many other Roman Catholic priests and lay people in Liverpool is a relationship in Christ. It is based on prayer to the Father. It is consistently Christ-centred. You refer to my years at The Mayflower Family Centre in East London. Those years were very influential indeed for me in deciding that it was not possible to have the luxury of Christians keeping themselves only to the group of those who believe precisely the same. We knew there how cold a secular wind blows, for perhaps 1% of the whole population went to any Church at all. I came there to understand how much we need all the allies we can find, and I found then and I find now that God is at work through all the Churches.

I am saddened that you in honest conviction do not believe that you can enter into this Christian partnership which for me is a matter of obedience to the Lord, who prayed that His people should be one. But I respect and understand your convictions. I hope that you may understand that I, too, believe that I am following the way that the truth of God as I understand it in Jesus Christ leads me.

If you are publishing your letter, I hope you will publish this letter in whole too.

Yours sincerely in Christ.

DAVID LIVERPOOL.

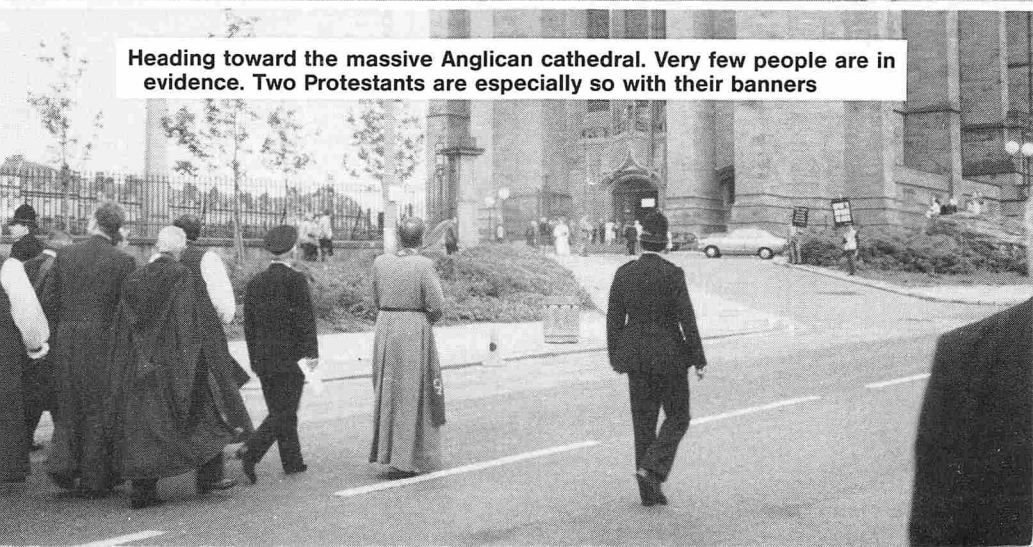
The Protestants show their banners and texts



With the city in the background the leaders head toward the Anglican cathedral. On the right next to the policeman is a young preacher preaching all the way!



Heading toward the massive Anglican cathedral. Very few people are in evidence. Two Protestants are especially so with their banners



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