

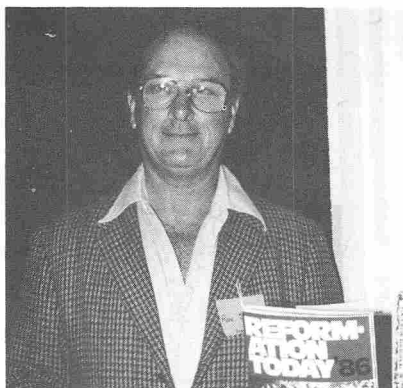
REFORM- ATION TODAY'86



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Featured above (on the left) is Brian Stone, pastor of Wynberg Baptist Church, Capetown. With him is Dr. John Temple formerly a founder member and elder of The Lynnwood Baptist Church, Pretoria.



Ron Stimpson a leader in the work of Christian literature in South Africa.

John Leevers pastor of a Baptist Church in New Zealand attended the conference at Skogheim, Natal (see editorial). On the right is Mark, a medical student.



Front cover — Table mountain, symbol of the gateway to South Africa. In the foreground: Bernard Cartledge, pastor of the Baptist Church at Goodwood. The principal solution to the problems of all nations is the gospel of Christ. Most important is vision and determination. The principles and truths to inspire such vision are set before us by Tom Nettles in his article on Adoniram Judson.

Editorial

Where is history going?

As John Campbell shows, history is meaningless if we follow the views of pagan philosophy. Likewise we should avoid a blind optimism. The carnage of world war, together with the dreadful accumulation of international problems, not least the spiralling of the world population, has made for more realism. The idea of a worldly utopia is far less popular than it used to be.

Jonathan Edwards was grappling with the subject of the glory of God as it relates to the course of world history when he died in 1758. The glory of God is surely the key to understanding what history is all about. John Campbell, in discussing various ways of looking at history speaks of 'The Climactic Model', and reminds us of Daniel.

In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure for ever (Dan 2:44, 45).

The question can be asked whether the Holy Spirit would be willing to bear the reproach that he had failed to convert the world and thus bring glory to Christ? The response to that could be that he never promised to convert the world in the first place. The extent to which the glory of the Messiah is to follow his sufferings is something which can be appraised in general terms by a careful study of the psalms and the prophets, particularly Isaiah. Central to Isaiah's messages are the promised descriptions of the Messiah's reign and the glory of his kingdom as it extends and increases here on this earth (Ischs 2, 11, 35, 42, 49, 52-53, 54-55, 60ff.).

The Merseyside Gospel Witness

Having received the truth of the Gospel from our forefathers we must be sure to hand on that inheritance to our children and grandchildren. At a great price the Reformers retrieved the Gospel for us. The Puritans expounded the truths of that Gospel in the clearest formulation yet attained by any body of Christians (The

Westminster formularies, and the 1689 Confession of Faith). Here on Merseyside there is the clearest expression of Ecumenism, probably in the world. The modernist section do not believe anyway, the Anglican section embrace everything and thereby nullify any possible clarity about the Gospel, and the RCs would take us back to pre-Reformation darkness. It is important therefore to persevere in promoting the truth and seeking unity in the truth of Justification by Faith.

The first Evangelical and Reformed Conference, Pretoria

The emphasis on the lessons of history will soon be seen from the report provided by Brian Darroll. Times of political uncertainty are often times of spiritual awakening. That was certainly the case during the time of civil war in America 1861-65. Could that civil war have been averted? That subject could possibly provide valuable material for guidance in South Africa today.

What is needed is a powerful Reformed awakening. Ds Fillipus Buys was particularly helpful in his exposition of the doctrines of grace showing the power of those truths to destroy racial prejudice. The *Evangelical Times* (Sept.) has published an excellent article in which the work of Ds Buys is described.

The annual conference at Skogheim, Natal

Since the appearance of *R.T.92* I have travelled 23,000 miles. First there was the conference work in South Africa in which I enjoyed the privilege of sharing the ministry with Douglas MacMillan, professor of Church history at the Free Church College in Edinburgh. From the Cape I flew to Memphis, Tennessee, to participate in the Southern Baptist Founders' Conference. Concerning the time in South Africa it was encouraging to observe enthusiasm and support for the Skogheim gathering. We hold over a report for the next issue. The impression given to the two overseas speakers, who have the advantage of viewing the situation in perspective, is that there is certainly justification for the development of Reformed conference in Pretoria. This need not injure the interests of the annual

conference at Skogheim which was started in 1971.

After a demanding tour of Australia Douglas MacMillan was joined by his wife and they were able to spend a week in the Kruger National Park before beginning the ministerial commitments in South Africa.

Capetown

The above reference to a period of rest is relevant because considerable reserves of stamina are necessary to do justice to the requirements of an itinerant ministry in which one has to adjust quickly to new circumstances. Especially is this the case in Capetown where we had to prepare our materials at very short notice. Those who lead in the Cape are so committed to their Seminary or church work that long term planning has not been easy. The potential for organizing a conference similar to that which took place in Pretoria is great. Such an undertaking is often an extension of an existing fraternal. The comments made in this paragraph are not to be understood in a critical sense. Rather it is a cause of joy that the ministries of those who proclaim free grace are being prospered. If pastors are engaged in harvesting it severely restricts the time that can be devoted to a wider work.

I discussed the role of the ministers' fraternal with Bernard Cartledge who is the minister of the Goodwood Baptist Church. How to best employ the talent within a fraternal of pastors and organise a plan for the wisest use of material from those from further afield is a subject to which we would like to devote an article in this magazine.

One of the engagements organised for us was a visit to the Baptist College. Prof. MacMillan spoke on the subject of John Calvin and how he prepared men to minister in France. Reference is made to the subject in Brian Darroll's report on the Pretoria conference.

It would be interesting to compare the work of three great leaders, Luther, Calvin and Spurgeon. Before his decease Calvin was instrumental in training about 1,200 pastors who pioneered a marvellous work in France. Possibly Luther's most significant achievement was the

conversion of the entire faculty at Wittenberg to the doctrine of Justification by Faith between 1514 and 1517. The 22 professors were responsible for sending out about 20,000 men during Luther's lifetime. He himself maintained a daily routine of lecturing at the University to the end of his life. The third leader, this time much nearer our day, is Spurgeon. In addition to many other significant accomplishments Spurgeon encouraged and helped train 900 men for the ministry. Today there is a tendency to think merely in terms of academic training. The leaders referred to here were determined to produce men who were resilient and ready to endure hardship. Calvin was concerned to equip his men to live as fugitives in a hostile environment, men who could integrate with the common people, earn their own living, and then plant churches (see Calvin's rules in Pretoria Conference report). We need to train men not only in the art of church planting but also in the business of reforming churches that have gone astray. That takes a Phd in grit and determination.

The Southern Baptist Founders' Conference, Memphis

The Reformed awakening taking place in the U.S.A. is very encouraging. In a country so large we can expect a movement to have a different character as it finds expression in different denominations. The Southern Baptist Convention is the largest evangelical grouping in the world. Dr Tom Nettles who is teaching history at the Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary has been much used to draw attention to the fact that the founding fathers of the Convention were men of unusual stature in their expository powers and their firm adherence to the doctrines of grace. Rather than discuss the issues here further details must also be held over.

Gift of Prophecy in 1 Corinthians

The book with the above title by Wayne Grudem has been reviewed by Victor Budgen, the author of *The Charismatics and the Word of God*.

It is purposed to print this important review in the next issue. It was the dis-

torted review of Victor Budgen's book that added to dissatisfaction with the *Evangelical Times*. The controversy over *E.T.* has confused many. Some have written to ask about the matter.

Which direction should we take for the future, — and 'E.T.'?

With regard to *E.T.* we should distinguish carefully between personal issues and principle. The shifting of attention to personal acrimony has been mischievous and we should ignore it completely. The pivot upon which everything turns is the question whether evangelicalism should take the charismatic road or not. It is that, or the Jeremiah road of Jeremiah 6:16.

In this editorial we have been taken up to some extent with history. The battle throughout this dispensation has been over the sufficiency of Scripture. Do we need to add tradition? Do we have to add entertainment? Surely the Word will be boring unless we spice it up with our ideas and additions? If we seem to be struggling with the ordinary means of grace then (think many), it is surely time to look for the extraordinary, for miracles, wonders, tongues, prophecies and apostles.

The question of which direction should be taken is not an unimportant one. One of the merits of *Charismatics and the Word of God*, is that it illustrates so well the consequences of former attempts to take a new direction. The 'charismatic' direction is in its very nature an addition to the Word. The damage that has been done by

way of division in churches throughout Britain and abroad is beyond calculation.

Concerning *E.T.* it is a tremendous blessing to have a paper that has regained its former reliability. The June issue was produced under unusually difficult circumstances. There was a marked improvement in the July issue. The August and September issues are absolutely first rate. The overseas news coverage is particularly discerning. There is a decisiveness in dealing with the basic controversial issues which effect us all. *E.T.* is commended to our readers abroad as a reliable monthly newspaper which also carries expository articles and helpful reviews (16-18 High Street, WELWYN, Herts. AL6 9EQ. £5.00 p.a. U.K.).

Should we be concerned about human rights?

Writing in *The Times* (18.8.86) Robert Conquest, a leading authority on Soviet history, says that Stalin's policies were responsible for the deaths of 14 million peasants in the Soviet Union between 1930 and 1937. Today all the main features of Stalin's system remain, only the scale of the operation is different. That is only one aspect of human rights about which we should be concerned. We are grateful to Sharon for her work. She was married to Bill James in June. They have settled at Darlington where Bill is a member of the Reformed Baptist church. Sharon has been working on Baptist history. She is due to take a school head of history department soon, which is likely to restrict her work time for *R.T.*

Adoniram Judson (continued from page 8)

passion for holiness of life and conformity to Christ. Nor would he allow the churches to indulge themselves in self-interest when our Lord had emptied himself and taken upon himself the form of a servant. May God in his grace prick our consciences again with one like Judson.

Footnotes

¹ 2:366. All quotations are from *Memoir of the Life and Labors of the Rev. Adoniram Judson, D.D.*, 2 vols., ed. Francis Wayland. Boston: Phillips, Sampson & Co., 1835. ² 2:367-368. ³ 1:206. ⁴ 1:177. ⁵ 1:225-226. ⁶ 1:242. ⁷ 1:325. ⁸ 1:523. ⁹ 1:178. ¹⁰ 2:50. ¹¹ 2:75. ¹² 2:75, 76. ¹³ 2:236-237. ¹⁴ 2:486-487. ¹⁵ 2:486-490. ¹⁶ 2:493-494. ¹⁷ 2:519. ¹⁸ 2:521. ¹⁹ 1:229. ²⁰ 1:234. ²¹ 1:221. ²² James D. Knowles, *Memoir of Mrs. Ann H. Judson, Late Missionary to Burmah, Including a History of the American Baptist Mission in the Burman Empire* (Boston: Lincoln and Edmands, 1829), pp. 161, 162. ²³ 2:219. ²⁴ 2:235-236 cf. also 2:371. ²⁵ 2:454. ²⁶ 1:296, May 20. ²⁷ 1:296-297. ²⁸ 1:299.

In the first part of Tom Nettle's article on Adoniram Judson, missionary work was shown to be sheer, unrelenting hard labour. Judson himself was clearly aware of this; when requesting his future wife's hand in marriage, he asked her parents if they were prepared to say farewell to Ann forever, allowing her to be subjected to the hardships of missionary life.

Adoniram and Ann Judson's underlying strength was shown firstly to be their commitment to Scripture. Judson spent four years learning the Burmese language before beginning the enormous task of translating the New Testament. This took a further seven years, after which he was asked to begin work on the Old Testament! Understandably, he wrote, 'Happy is the missionary who goes to a country where the Bible is translated to his hand.'

The theological foundation undergirding his work is now further described.

Adoniram Judson

part 2

On a visit to America, thirty-three years after his departure and just six before his death, he spoke before the American and Foreign Bible Society. His commitment to the Scripture as an infallible revelation from God is best summed up in the words delivered before that body in 1845.

The Word of God is the golden lamp hung out of heaven to enlighten the nations that sit in darkness, and to show them the path that leads from the confines of hell to the gates of paradise. The Bible, in the original tongues, comprises all the revelation now extant which God has given to this world. It is, in all its contents, and part, and appendages, just the book, the one book, which infinite wisdom saw best adapted to answer the end of a written revelation. It may not be reducible to the rules of human philosophy or logic, for it transcends them all. It is just as clear and obscure, just as copious and scanty, has just as many beauties and blemishes, is replete with just as many difficulties and apparent contradictions, as infinite wisdom saw necessary, in order to make it like all the works of God, perfect and unique. This one perfect book is the sacred deposit in the hands of the Church. It has been deposited with the injunction, 'Freely ye have received, freely give.' Woe be to that man who withholds the treasure from his neighbour. Woe be to him who attempts to obscure the light of the lamp of heaven. It is the peculiar glory of the last half century that the Christian world has awaked to the duty and importance of giving the sacred word 'to all lands'. Praised be God for Bible and Missionary Societies, the peculiar institutions of modern times. May their efforts be continued and enlarged a hundred fold, until their work is consummated — until the Bible is translated and published in every language under heaven, and a copy of the sacred volume deposited in every palace, and house, and hut inhabited by man.¹³

The Blood of the Eternal Covenant

Second, the work of Christ in light of the covenant of redemption served as the undergirding rationale for a life of selfless missionary activity. The only sermon

Judson ever preached in English while in Burma was based on John 10:1-18. Since Christ, as the good shepherd, is the great exemplar of his ministers, Christian ministers must emulate his example.

1. Christ is the good shepherd: he gave his life for the sheep . . . the flock which had been given him by the Father, and on which he had set his heart from all eternity. . . . As Christ spared nothing, shrunk from nothing which would conduce to the salvation of his people, so the faithful minister of Christ will give up all for the good of the people to whom he ministers.¹⁴

3. The true shepherd calleth his own sheep by name, and the sheep hear his voice. . . . We come now to consider the main duty of a Christian pastor. First he must call his people. Though enclosed in the Saviour's electing love, they may still be wandering on the dark mountains of sin, and he must go after them. . . . And as he cannot at first distinguish them from the rest, who will never listen and be saved, he must lift up his voice to all, without discrimination, and utter, in the hearing of all, that invitation of mercy and love which will penetrate the ears and the hearts of the elect only.¹⁵

Christ's labours and suffering, however, were not aimed primarily toward man, but toward the glory of his Father. After a most elevated and admirable display of fervent oratory extolling the infinite perfections of God in demonstration of the rightness of his doing everything to display all the attributes of the divine nature he concludes:

On this ground we rest the doctrine of self-denial, renunciation of self-interest, abandonment of self. Still further, even our compassion for souls and our zeal for their salvation must be kept in subordination to the supreme will of God. The love of Christ was so strong as to bring him down from heaven to earth, and to the mansions of the dead; yet so chastened was that love, and so subordinate to the will of God, that, though he foresaw the doom of a certain portion of his hearers, he still would say, 'I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and has revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.' And to this sentiment may we be enabled to respond a hearty Amen.¹⁶

Judson's last message in America in 1846 before he returned to Burma was entitled 'Obedience to Christ's last Command a Test of Piety'. Arguing forcibly that 'it is the nature of true love to seek the pleasure and happiness of the person beloved', Judson asks 'What is the object on which the heart of the Saviour is set?' Christ's humiliation and exaltation should prompt a sobering answer.

For what purpose did he leave the bosom of the Father, the throne of eternal glory, to come down to sojourn, and suffer and die in the fallen rebellious world? For what purpose does he now sit on the mediatorial throne, and exert the power with which he is invested? To restore the ruins of paradise — to redeem his chosen people from death and hell — to extend and establish his kingdom throughout the habitable globe. This is evident from his whole course on earth, from his promises to the church, and especially from his parting command, 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature'.¹⁷

No profession ought to be regarded as sincere, Judson argues, and no love to the Saviour genuine unless it be attended with a sincere endeavour to obey Christ's

last command. All must either go or unite in supporting those who do go. He ends his message with this plea.

How is it possible that you love the Saviour, and yet feel no interest in that object on which his heart is set? What, love the Saviour, who bled and died for this cause, and yet spend your whole existence on earth in toiling for your personal sustenance, and gratification, and vain-glory! O, that dread tribunal to which we are hastening! Souls stripped of all disguise there! The final judge, a consuming fire! 'Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.'¹⁸

The sovereignty which established the covenant of redemption functioned for Judson not only as the motive to abandon himself to missions, but undergirded his practical, everyday work. On one occasion, Judson's demonstration to two Buddhists of the inadequacy of the Buddhist system of thought was so clear that they themselves expressed assent to and approbation of his doctrine. They concluded, however, that it was impossible for them to embrace a new religion. So remarkable was the incongruity between apprehension of truth and affection of mind that Judson said, 'I never saw more clearly the truth of our Saviour's words, "Ye will not come unto me".'¹⁹

As far as Judson was concerned, the only remedy for such painful incongruity was the sovereign and effectual working of the Spirit of God. In recording frequent interviews with Burmans, Judson uses phrases like:

Today he has made me half inclined to believe that a work of grace is begun in his soul (1:232) . . . his expressions have satisfied us all that he is one of God's chosen people (1:233). . . . He seemed to obtain some evangelical discoveries, and to receive the humbling truths of the gospel in a manner which encourages us to hope that the Spirit of God has begun to teach him (1:233) . . . the way seems to be prepared in his mind for the special operation of divine grace. Come Holy Spirit, Heavenly Dove!²⁰

This reliance on the effectual working of the Spirit shows itself throughout Judson's work quite often in a remarkable way. Judson, though obviously zealous in his evangelism, refused to intrude in areas of divine prerogative. Where many modern methods would boldly advise the evangelist to extort a decision from the inquirer, Judson, with perhaps greater boldness, refused to intrude in the area where only divine activity can penetrate. In May of 1819, Judson, doubtless eager for a convert, found himself engaged in earnest exhortation with two Burman inquirers. After they left, he recorded the following in his journal:

Both say they are convinced that there is an eternal God; that having denied him all their lives, and of course lived contrary to his commands, their sins are great; and that news of salvation, through the death of the Son, is good news. Thus far they venture. But whether the Spirit has given, or will give, them true love to the Saviour, and thus enable them to treat him, we must leave for time to ascertain.²¹

God's Purpose of Gospel Effectuality

The third plank in this theological foundation for mission was their conviction

that God had an intention of a great and overpowering success of gospel preaching in missionary endeavour. On a visit to Ava, Judson saw the site of Pah-gan, once the seat of government, now in ruins. Surveying the once-splendid pagodas, temples, and monuments of various kinds, Judson exclaimed how this scene of splendid ruin encouraged him for the future success of the gospel.

Here, about eight hundred years ago, the religion of Boodh was first publicly recognized, and established as the religion of the empire. . . . We looked back on the centuries of darkness that are past. We looked forward and Christian hope would feign brighten the prospect. Perhaps we stand on the dividing line of the empires of darkness and light. O, shade of Shen An-rah-han! weep over thy fallen fanes; retire from the scenes of thy past greatness! But thou smilest at my feeble voice. Linger, then, thy little remaining day. A voice mightier than mine — a still small voice — will ere long sweep away every vestige of thy dominion. The churches of Jesus will soon supplant these idolatrous monuments, and the chanting of the devotees of Boodh will die away before the Christian hymn of praise.²²

He exhibited the same confidence when he appeared before the Baptists in Boston in 1846. He closed his short speech with the following request: 'I will only add, that I beg your prayers for the brethren I have left in Burma; for the feeble churches we have planted there; and that the good work of God's grace may go on until the world shall be filled with his glory.'²³

In 1849, he was still looking for that rapid spread of the gospel. Though he could with gratefulness and joy point to a very encouraging proliferation of churches among Burmans and Karens, he had to say 'At my age . . . I can hardly expect to see the long-desired and long-prayed-for triumph of the Redeemer's kingdom in Burma; but I trust I shall see it from the windows of paradise. . . . We live in wonderful times. Every revolution among the kingdoms of the earth seems to be designed to prepare the way for the universal establishment of the Kingdom of Christ.'²⁴ Judson wrote an amazing piece of missionary literature entitled *The Golden Balance*, in which he overtly confronted every major doctrine of Buddhism and sought to demonstrate the superiority of Christianity at each respective point. His persuasion of the enduring and victorious nature of the Christian faith as opposed to the transience of other religions compels his triumphant conclusion:

Does that religion appear to be the more excellent which has been gradually declining, is now near extinction, and will ere long become utterly extinct, even as Guadama himself has attained the extinction of nigan? Or is that religion the more excellent, which from day to day has been increasing, and at the present time, in the near approach of the millennial era, when the disciples are making extraordinary efforts, is beginning to take root in the various countries where it had not been previously established, and will eventually overwhelm and sweep away all other religions, and be established throughout the whole world, and endure forevermore, even as Jesus Christ cannot become extinct, but will endure forever?²⁵

Judson's persuasion of the final triumph of gospel preaching led him to boldness in public proclamation and personal encounters. Judson evidently loved the vigour of confronting individuals in one-on-one argument concerning

the issues of the gospel. Anecdotes related to this method abound in his *Memoir*. The following one should indicate both the sophistication of these talks and Judson's delight in them.²⁶

May 20, Lord's Day. Encountered another new character, one Moun Long, from the neighbourhood of Shwa-doung, a disciple of the great Toung-dwen teacher, the acknowledged head of all the semi-atheists in the country. Like the rest of the sect, Moun Long is, in reality, a complete sceptic, scarcely believing his own existence. They say he is always quarrelling with his wife on some metaphysical point. For instance, if she says, 'The rice is ready,' he will reply, 'Rice! what is rice? Is it matter or spirit? Is it an idea, or is it nonentity?' Perhaps she will say, 'It is matter'; and he will reply, 'Well, wife, and what is matter? Are you sure there is such a thing in existence, or are you merely subject to a delusion of the senses?'

When he first came in, I thought him an ordinary man. He has only one good eye; but I soon discovered that that one eye has as 'great a quantity of being' as half a dozen common eyes. In his manners he is just the reverse of Moun Thah-ee all suavity, and humility, and respect. He professed to be an inquirer after the truth; and I accordingly opened to him some parts of the gospel. He listened with great seriousness, and when I ceased speaking, remained so thoughtful, and apparently impressed with the truth, that I began to hope he would come to some good, and therefore invited him to ask some question, relative to what he had heard. 'Your servant,' said he, 'has not much to inquire of your lordship. In your lordship's sacred speech, however, there are one or two words that your servant does not understand. Your lordship says, that in the beginning God created one man and one woman. I do not understand (I beg your lordship's pardon) what a man is, and why he is called a man.' My eyes were now opened in an instant to his real character; and I had the happiness to be enabled, for about twenty minutes, to lay blow after blow upon his sceptical head, with such effect that he kept falling and falling; and though he made several desperate efforts to get up, he found himself, at last, prostrate on the ground, unable to stir. . . . The poor man was not, however, in the least angry at his discomfiture, but, in the true spirit of his school, said that, though he had heard much of me, the reality far exceeded the report.²⁷

We must not think that this was mere metaphysical wrangling or a point of pride with Judson. He was bringing every thought and imagination captive to Christ while relying absolutely on divine grace. On June 11, he records that Moun Long and wife spent most of the day with him and Mrs. Judson. The main inquiry that day was how they could obtain faith in Christ. Judson concludes, 'May the Holy Spirit solve their difficulties, by giving them an experimental acquaintance with that saving grace!'²⁸

Many other issues could be opened from the life and missionary example of Judson. These must suffice for this presentation. I would like to close with this observation: Never was a man more earnest and singleminded about the work of God than Adoniram Judson. Whatever his weaknesses may have been: his tendency to highs and lows in temperament, his temporary infatuation with medieval Catholic mysticism, and his macabre melancholia at the time of the death of his first wife, Ann; none can ever say that he slackened for a day in his

(Continued on page 3)

Should we be Concerned about Human Rights?



Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo

Two excellent television programmes, shown during July, reminded us of the ongoing plight of prisoners of conscience in different areas of the world.

In last June's *Evangelical Times* Professor Donald MacLeod wrote as follows: 'When a government behaves callously and oppressively, the church is condemned if it remains silent.' Christians sometimes 'turn off' when conversation turns to 'Human Rights'. Surely, we say, our business is to stress responsibilities rather than rights?

Our answer is that Christians, of all people, have the *understanding* of the *nature* of humans which enables us to stand up for their rights. We have a

responsibility, not to fight for our *own* rights, but to defend the position of those who are being oppressed or threatened, especially when they cannot defend themselves. In his excellent chapter on 'Human Rights' in *Issues Facing Christians Today* (Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1984, £5.95) John Stott shows that it is nonsense to speak of human rights unless we understand human nature (p. 144). The Bible shows that 'God created man in his own image'. *Every* human has the dignity of having been made in God's image. So Christians have a deep sense of human worth. As William Temple said, 'There can be no Rights of Man except on the basis of faith in God'. Stott reinforces this.

'Our value depends, then on God's view of us, and relationship to us. As a result of this, human rights are not unlimited rights, as if we were free to be and do absolutely anything we like' (p. 145).

Not only does the Christian respect human dignity, we affirm human equality; we don't scorn the weak or the poor, all equally have been created by God. We also have responsibility, because God has commanded us to love others.

'The law and the prophets, Jesus and his apostles, all lay on us a particular duty to serve the poor and defend the powerless. We cannot escape this by saying that they are not our responsibility' (p. 150).

Not only so, but we should in a real sense be outraged when we know that such people are being violently abused.

The Nuclear Gulag (Channel 4, 11-7-86) was a documentary exposing the appalling conditions suffered by prisoners in Soviet Concentration camps, using film secretly shot in the U.S.S.R. over four years. Several former prisoners were interviewed, including Herman Hartfield, an evangelical Baptist pastor who refused to register his congregation. In 1974 he was sentenced to five years hard labour, and sent to a uranium mine. Due to absence of safety equipment, radiation normally causes death within six to twelve months. Doctors use the victims in the camps for research into the physical effects of radiation. Unusually, Hartfield survived eighteen months, was then released, and allowed to leave the country. He was told that if he ever divulged conditions in the mines he would be killed — wherever he was. Now a pastor in Geneva he defied that threat by speaking of the plight of fellow prisoners. He pleaded at the end of the programme with those of us who live in freedom to 'wake up' to the situation of dissidents in the U.S.S.R. and other such régimes.

Peter Reddaway, a Soviet expert in Washington, claimed during the pro-

gramme that *all* the main features of Stalin's system remain in the U.S.S.R.; the only difference being the scale of the operation. Under Stalin millions died. Today thousands die. There are now about 2,000 camps in the U.S.S.R., and about 4,000 religious and political prisoners are known to be held in 96 of them.

The programme drew on material collected by the Metropolitan Tabernacle (Elephant and Castle, London SE1 6SD) which distributes *News of Suffering Soviet Believers* free of charge (please send 12p postage for a single copy; 5 copies, 30p). They derive much information from 'Missionswerk Friedensstimme', an organisation of Russian immigrants in West Germany. Its staff and Council are former unregistered Baptists, including pastors and ex-prisoners. In 1984 the British branch of this work begun. *Article 227* is a magazine giving up to date information from the U.S.S.R. and can be ordered free of charge from:

FRIEDENSSTIMME (U.K.),
P.O. BOX 10,
LEICESTER LE3 2FX,
ENGLAND
Tel.: 0455-63 3856.

In a future issue we hope to further highlight the situation of the unregistered Baptists in the U.S.S.R.

The plight of religious dissidents in Eastern bloc countries is constantly researched and exposed by the Human Rights organisation, Amnesty International. Their bi-monthly magazine *Amnesty* has carried some excellent articles over the past two years, including a horrifying report on 'Psychoprisons in the U.S.S.R.' (pp. 14-15, *Amnesty* June 1985) a report on fortune in the U.S.S.R. (pp. 20-21, *Amnesty* — August/September 1985), a report on labour camps in Albania (pp. 2-3, *Amnesty* — December/January 1985) and a feature on persecuted evangelists

In Rumania (pp. 24-25, *Amnesty* — August/September 1985).

Amnesty International not only researches and provides information about Prisoners of Conscience all over the world; it also campaigns ceaselessly on their behalf. Only a minority of countries enjoy the freedoms which we do in Britain — in far more cases political and religious liberty is unknown. (Amnesty International, 5 Roberts Place, off Bowling Green Lane, London EC1B 1HE.)

We were reminded of the appalling violence and instability prevailing in much of Central and South America by another excellent programme on Channel 4 (14-7-86), *THE MOTHERS OF PLAZA DE MAYO* was a deeply moving and inspiring documentary about the courageous fight of Argentine mothers to draw world attention to the disappearance of 30,000 young people during the years before the overthrow of the military dictatorship. Fear prevented the majority of Argentinian citizens from standing up against appalling evil, but these mothers risked their own lives to gather in the square before the presidential palace each week in silent protest at the 'disappearance' of their children.

Such 'disappearances' have, it would seem, now ceased in Argentina. They are a frightening and regular feature of life in Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Chile. The technique of 'disappearing' people was first developed by the Nazis in occupied France — they found it to be the most effective possible means of intimidating a population. For a family to have a loved one simply 'disappear' and *never* to know what happened, is the most cruel form of psychological torture. Years later, mothers testify that when they hear a car draw up outside they

start inwardly 'in case' their child is back. Amnesty has documented as many cases as possible of such 'disappearances'.

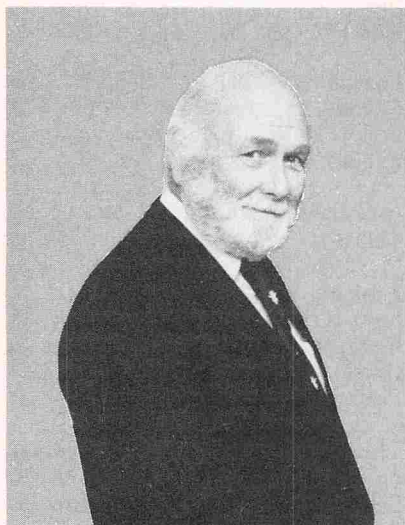
In Guatemala between 1976 and 1984, 35,000 were either murdered or made to disappear by armed forces and paramilitary organisations.

In El Salvador, during the same period, 45,000 suffered the same fate. During May 1986 the Duarte Government in El Salvador launched a major attack on human rights workers in El Salvador, members of such organisations as the Christian Committee for Displaced Persons of El Salvador.

This is despite major international protest at the abduction on 6th May of Laura Pinto, of the Committee of 'Mothers of Political Prisoners, Disappeared and Assassinated of El Salvador'. She was held for two days, interrogated and tortured, beaten, stripped, raped and seriously wounded in the abdomen with a knife. She was released on 8th May, and reabducted on 29th May. Other women human rights workers have similarly been abducted during the past three months. (Further information from El Salvador Committee for Human Rights, 83 Margaret Street, London W1N 7HB.)

As Christians who enjoy extraordinary freedom, materially and spiritually, we *cannot* be complacent about the grim aspects of other régimes. It is more pleasant not to find out about the injustices and oppression carried out by governments of both 'left' and 'right'. But surely we should not remain passive and silent; it is shameful if evangelicals collectively 'opt out' of any involvement with those organisations which strive to secure the release of prisoners of conscience, who have committed no crime, who have no fair trial, and who face torture and probable death.

The Merseyside Gospel Witness



Pastor John Beattie whose tall figure reminds us of J. C. Ryle

The M.G.W. was inaugurated during May 1986. This was in response to the Ecumenical claim made by the bishops of Liverpool that all the churches were represented. The evangelical churches are not part of the Ecumenical movement. This is not because they do not believe in unity but rather because it is not possible to maintain the Gospel when the entire Roman Catholic system is intrinsically alien to justification by faith, and when the modernists reject the very foundations of truth, and when the remnant within the C. of E. within the Ecumenical movement are so afraid of offending anyone that they become dumb. Bishop David Sheppard was at one time an evangelical, but now places the idols of Baal (modernism, sacramentalism) alongside the gospel. When I asked him personally about bishop Jenkins and his denials of Christ his response was that the Church needs a variety of opinions. But the truth is that one cannot serve Baal and Christ. You must choose one or the other. We ask bishop David Sheppard, How long will you waver between two opinions? If Baal be God serve him, if Christ be God serve him.

The meetings of M.G.W., June 1986

Three meetings were well attended during June. These took place at the Belvidere Road Church, Liverpool. The three were designed to embrace the past, the present and the future.

Firstly, pastor John Beattie presented the life and ministry of the first bishop of Liverpool, J. C. Ryle. This took us back to remind us of what can be done when a leader is faithful to the Gospel. The only way that a Christian can vindicate his position when he is in a denomination where the truth is abused and denied is by having a testimony for the truth as Ryle did. His writings are still in popular demand. It is doubtful whether any other evangelical in the C. of E. has accomplished as much as an expositor of the Gospel. He is the C. of E. counterpart of C. H. Spurgeon. We look forward to publishing a biographical article on bishop Ryle in which our readers will be able to appreciate the wonderful way in which this leader was used. It is tragic that today there is not one C. of E. bishop today who remotely resembles J. C. Ryle.

The second meeting demonstrated how the Gospel is to be proclaimed today. John Blanchard showed how the Gospel is first bad news and then good news. First it is bad news because it tells us truthfully that we are lost forever, being guilty sinners before God. Then there is the good news that a complete salvation has been provided, not a miserable 'try and make yourself better remedy', but a perfect provision of God's Righteousness, upon which basis he declares he preached throughout the land, the identical Gospel that Ryle proclaimed.

The third meeting was addressed by James Hogg. Having been taken back to the past, seen how the Gospel should be preached today, we were now challenged about the future. It is all very well to be concerned for the unity of the churches, but what about the unity of your local church, and of the local church to which I belong? It is only as

Reverend John Campbell was recently engaged in a preaching tour of South Africa. Before he came to his present pastorate in Albany, Western Australia, he lectured in several units of theology and history at the Baptist College in Perth. He pioneered a course in the philosophy of history, and this article reflects that interest.

‘Where is History Going?’

by Rev. W. J. Campbell, Albany, W. Australia

Modern man is beset by fears in a world reverberating with the distant hoofbeats of apocalyptic horsemen. Daily burdened with world disasters and international tensions through spectacular media presentation, he often wonders if life is worth living. He sometimes feels empty and anxious, and as nuclear shadows fall across his pathway he ponders the purpose of life.

Because he is made in the image of God, fallen man instinctively looks for *meaning* and *order* in historical events. Further, because the image is marred, man by himself cannot discover or identify such ultimate significance. Through the Fall, he has made himself the final reference point for assessing reality, for he has lost the one transcendent frame of reference — the gracious, self-revealing God. Consequently, sinful man either imposes his own meaning upon reality, or else denies that such meaning exists.¹

How then does ‘autonomous’ man explain what causes things to happen in history? The historian Gottschalk defines cause as ‘a convenient figure of speech, describing motives, influences, forces, and other antecedent inter-

we experience a true spiritual unity of love and harmony in our own fellowship that we can contribute to that wider unity which is so important if we are not to be viewed as a fragmented and powerless force before the armies of Baal. James Hogg is within the Baptist Union of New South Wales, Australia. It is the vibrant unity of the church led by pastor Hogg that has provided a foundation of support by which a campaign of reformation has been launched which has had profound effects upon the denomination as a whole.

This is a reminder that the health of an evangelical constituency in any given area is no better or stronger than the health of the constituent parts. It is a reminder too that independency can be a major curse to the Church of Christ abroad or in any given area. Independency can be a blessing

to preserve from error but also a curse because isolation not only shuts out germs, the germs or bacteria of error, but effectively prevents contact which will bring new life and power. The presence of a ministers’ fraternal in any given area is one means by which independent churches can have some association and a means by which the riches of God’s Word can be shared.

We need to work at unity within our local churches, and then hope and pray that we can truly build up that wider unity. The glory of true Christian unity was opened to us by pastor Hogg through Psalm 133. Many are the advantages of unity both for individual churches and for the wider body. We are encouraged to work at displaying that unity in the future.

relations not fully understood. It may be defined as any preceding event in what is assumed to be a consequential and interrelated complex' (*Understanding History* p. 235). There are *three general answers* that may be given.

Firstly, apostate scholars propose the *deification of causes* — this involves the tendency to transform *secondary* causes into *primary* ones. Herodotus and Carlyle stressed the role of *great men* in history. Marx saw the determining factor in history as an *economic one*; the mechanism of dialectical materialism. Montesquieu and F. J. Turner emphasised the role of *geography*, whereas Herder, Michelet and H. B. Adams accentuated the place of *national, racial characteristics*. Ancient Heraclitus underlined *military influence*, while the modern A. T. Mahan saw in sea-power the crux of modern world affairs. Man's *competitive instincts* (Hobbes) and *cooperative instincts* (Locke) are both promoted as major causal factors, while Kant said that *selfishness, passion and ignorance* produced conflict, and therefore change. In varied measure, these and similar explanations of cause have been advanced, often couched in such a way as to exclude the relevance of transcendent factors. This tendency is epitomized in the leading scientist Jacques Monod's book, *Chance and Necessity*. He argues 'that the enormous variety of nature and the richness of human culture can all be explained by the laws of physics and chemistry'. This is the essence of Secularism. It depicts a world closed tight against God.

When Pelagius exalted *human will* above its true causal value, he evoked from Augustine the same strong reaction that Erasmus did from Luther, who said: 'Histories are but the advertisement, memorial and token of the work and judgement of God, of the way in which he upholds, governs, hinders, advances, punishes and rewards the world and specially men as each may deserve, be it evil or good'. In their desire to let God be God, Luther and Augustine refused to deify secondary causes.

The designation of causes is a second alternative. Bypassing some interesting minor aspects, we look at the real issue as presented by Charles Beard and Carl Becker, the American historians. They reacted so violently against scientific Positivism² that they went to the other extreme of subjective relativism. They held that objective truth about history could not be known but that opinions and presuppositions of historians always distorted reality. Accordingly, Beard wanted to *eliminate the category of cause* from the subject, but it always crept back into his own writing! This relativism made possible two significant assertions about history and theology: (a) that all viewpoints have more or less equal validity; and (b) that perhaps there is no real or final meaning in history at all!

The demarcation of causes is the third alternative. The Bible offers ways of grasping the relationship between primary and secondary causes. Sometimes the Hebrew prophets bypassed earthly agents in their inspired explanations of God's power, but there is a general recognition of both aspects: e.g. Cyrus in Isaiah 45:1 and Habakkuk 1:5-6; Joseph in Genesis 50:20; Gideon in Judges 7; David in 1 Samuel 17:46-47; and the frustration of Saul and Haman as they

sought to destroy David and Mordecai respectively. Revelation chapter 5 presents the Lord Jesus as the only one who can ultimately initiate causation in history (the breaking of seals). Other references are Psalm 33:16-18; Psalm 127:1-2; Ecclesiastes 9:11-13; Romans 9 and Romans 11:33-36. We can see through a glass darkly, but even the elements of mystery and anguish have vital light shed upon them from God's Word (e.g. Job 38-42; Rom 8:28; Heb 2:8-9). In fact, events yet to occur may be regarded in some way as a cause of present events!

God's Word written is definitive in this matter. The Bible does not contain all facts, but it does contain *the truth about all facts!* This is the difference between two radically different approaches to knowledge — the elusive ideal of '*exhaustive knowledge*' and the guiding light of '*principled knowledge*'.³ God shows us in his own reliable Word some key ways in which he forms the pattern of events (e.g. judgement, deliverance). Calvin's grasp of this issue was comprehensive:

Here is displayed his wonderful goodness, and power, and providence; for sometimes he raises up some of his servants as public avengers, and arms them with his commission to punish unrighteous domination, and to deliver from their distressing calamities a people who have been unjustly oppressed: sometimes he accomplishes this end by the fury of men who meditate and attempt something altogether different. Thus he liberated the people of Israel from the tyranny of Pharaoh by Moses. . . . Thus he subdued the pride of Tyre by the Egyptians; the insolence of the Egyptians by the Assyrians; the haughtiness of the Assyrians by the Chaldeans; the confidence of Babylon by the Medes and Persians, after Cyrus had subjugated the Medes. The ingratitude of the kings of Israel and Judah, and their impious rebellion, notwithstanding his numerous favours, he repressed and punished, sometimes by the Assyrians, sometimes by the Babylonians. . . . Whatever opinion he formed of the acts of men, yet the Lord equally executed his work by them, when he broke the bloodied sceptres of insolent kings.

The Westminster Confession is somewhat more technical, but equally distinct (Ch. V, no. II, III):

- II Although, in relation to the foreknowledge and decree of God, the first Cause, all things come to pass immutably, and infallibly; yet, by the same providence, he ordereth them to fall out according to the nature of second causes, either necessarily, freely or contingently.
- III God, in his ordinary providence, maketh use of means, yet is free to work without, above, and against them at his pleasure.

This debate on causation may be suitably concluded with this somewhat Augustinian comment of Roland Bainton:

If history be defined as a chain of events, each linked to the other in causal sequence, then Christ makes plain to us that in this sense there never was any history because God is Lord of all events. He can break all sequences with that which is altogether new. Yet there is in events a sequence arising solely from the purpose of God, to culminate the drama of redemption. This, rather than either the wickedness or the goodness of man, explains the rise and fall of empires because hope is fixed upon him who sitteth above the circle of the earth (*Early and Medieval Christianity* p. 20).

When we recognise our limitations of comprehension by virtue of our derivative, finite and sinful nature, then we are knocking at the door of useful historical interpretation. However, careful scholarship and commonsense must accompany humility, or else we minimize the advantage which God's infallible Word gives to us.

Where, then, is history going? Even before Plato's *The Republic*, the ideal and goal of history have fascinated writers. What form would the City of Man ultimately take? That of Thomas More's Utopia? Kant's Rationality? Hegel's Freedom? Marx's Classless Society? Orwell's *1984*? Huxley's *Brave New World*? Mannheim's Technocratic Utopia? Spengler's lapsed agrarian society? Toynbee's ecumenical civilization? Jasper's united world civilization (*The Origin and Goal of History*)? Skinner's behaviouristic utopia of the 'manipulated man' (*Beyond Freedom and Dignity*)? Toffler's death of permanence? The general problem in this area is that such projected goals all come from *autonomous human speculation rather than Divine revelation*. Apostate man refuses to 'think God's thoughts after him' in a respectively reconstructive way. As in Eden, he declines God's own interpretation.

Each view broadly fits into an overall type, and here are some of the main patterns that men propose:

(1) *The Cyclical Model* – This classical Grecian theory is pessimistic because it emphasizes processes of degeneration in history (e.g. Hesiod:⁴ gold, silver, bronze and iron stages), and posits a deterministic recurrence of cycles that man is powerless to alter. Spengler wrote his *The Decline of the West* in the German aftermath of World War I, and said that history was like the annual seasons of living organisms, involving a fatalistic course of birth-life-death for each civilization, with no progress from one cycle to the next. Even the musical *Hair* celebrated the passing of the zodiacal cycle dominated by Pisces (Christian 'fish' symbol) and announced: 'This is the dawning of the age of Aquarius!'. Augustine trenchantly commented that the 'circular maze' of the false doctrines of cyclical interpreters was the only circular item in history!⁵

(2) *The Spiralling Model* – Vico (d. 1744) modified his cyclical view by suggesting that spiritual progress could be made from one cycle to another. Toynbee believes that civilizations (by means of creative leadership and appropriate response to crises) should eventually evolve into an ecumenical civilization, inspired and cemented by the combined spiritual forces of Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam. (His syncretism is odd, but his recognition of spiritual values is welcome.) He lists 21 civilizations that have risen or fallen, or are still alive; 5 arrested civilizations; and 4 abortive ones.

(3) *The Dialectical Model* – This 'waltz-step' theory of history was conceived by Hegel, who felt the Absolute Spirit was working its way out in history by conflict and synthesis to reach the goal of perfect freedom. This process comprehended four world-historical epochs: Oriental, Greek, Roman and Germanic! Marx took Hegel's dialectic, eliminated spiritual factors, and ended up with dialectical

materialism. Marxist history since then has tended to become propaganda. Even Moltmann's *Theology of Hope* seems more indebted to the Marxist bloc than to the Bible. Communism is, like many other historical ideals, deterministic. It lacks a human face.

(4) *The Dualistic Model*—Neo-orthodox thinkers such as Barth, Berdyaev, Piper and others use this pattern in some form. It involves the division of history into 'Historie' (bare facts) and 'Geschichte' (meaning), and tends to isolate the activity of God in the latter compartment ('Holy History').

(5) *The Random Model*—Harvey Cox (*On Not Leaving It To The Snake*) asks: 'Can we not set aside both falling firmament and sprouting spores as our images of history and act on the conviction that there is no future except the one we make?' Most existentialist Christians fit into this category, possibly even Bultmann. Those who are prone to internalize eschatology belong here with Albert Schweitzer who transferred eschatology into an ethical attitude of radical responsibility.

(6) *The Climactic Model*—This matches the biblical data as feet snuggle into shoes. It is significant that in Daniel's visions in Babylon, the cyclical rise and fall of empires gives place to the Kingdom of God, which alone reveals linear development in history. All the 'time' expressions in Scripture indicate that God has both purpose and programme. In fact the whole scheme of redemption as unfolded from creation to conclusion via the cross (Jn 12:31—Gk. 'Krisis') means for the Christian that history is invested with literally infinite significance. Augustine's penetrating analysis of the linear pattern, in which both Christian and non-Christian strands continue mixed (like wheat and tares) until the end when the Lord returns, has rightly been the most influential in Western thought. All history, says Augustine, is woven about these two towering realities—the City of God and the City of Man, and is governed by God's eschatological purpose. 'Grace and election are the essence and mystery of history' (N.B. Gen 15:16; Jn 2:4; Jn 12:23; Acts 17:31; Gal 4:4; Heb 1:1-3; Heb 12:26-27; 2 Pet 3:8-10—some 'time' passages).

How will we respond to the troubled condition of our civilization? Will we tremble with fear at every international crisis? Ought we to seek refuge with Jeremiah's countrymen in foreign alliances and temple inviolability? Must we lament with Jerome over Rome's fall: 'My tongue cleaves to the roof of my mouth and my voice is choked with sobs, to think that that city is captive which led captive the whole world?' No! Instead, we should live creatively with the assurance that the city of this world, secular civilization, is intrinsically transient and must pass away, but that the City of God endures forever? Perplexed but not in despair, the Christian knows that 'the light has always shone in the darkness, but the darkness has never put it out'.

Bernard Manning's observation encourages Christians today, as it did when first penned (1932):

Now history is a large-scale map, and . . . a large-scale map brings legitimate comfort to us when we are over-obsessed by the happenings of the moment. We

Sacramentalism

Sacramentalism denotes the idea of trust in human ordinances or actions, or thinking that spiritual power resides in physical objects like crosses or rosaries, or in water or oil, or bread or wine, as they are employed by priests. There is a worldwide trend to sacramentalism. Even evangelicals have begun to burn candles as a religious rite. The following appeal is related to sacramentalism, but is broader in its scope.

An appeal

Resources, materials and personal input for a major writing project on the current evangelical shift toward Romanism, the magisterium, the Mass, liturgies and sacramentalism. Dr John Armstrong, pastor of Trinity Baptist Church, Wheaton, Illinois and Dr Edwin Lutzer, pastor of Moody Memorial Church, Chicago, Illinois are planning to co-author a book which will document this 'New Oxford' direction and seek to

inform and warn evangelical believers. A significant shift to Rome and 'high church' Anglicanism is underway worldwide; witness the conversion of Dr Tom Howard of Gordon College to Roman Catholicism this past year. What role should the Church fathers play in this matter? How are we to view the Protestant Reformation, the cardinal doctrine of justification, renewal in liturgical worship and the inordinate emphasis on sacraments? 'Neo-Catholicism' is packaged in many ways but what will be its effect if evangelicals move in this direction? Pastor Armstrong would gladly appreciate any help which could be supplied for this project, especially evidence of this drift in the form of testimonies, book reviews and printed articles. If you can offer help in any form please contact Pastor Armstrong who will be pleased to pay for photocopying of any vital materials sent to him. His address:

Dr John H. Armstrong,
152 Yuma Lane, Carol Stream, IL 60188
Tel.: (312) 653-4144.

cease to take so seriously, what the evergreen variety of our contemporaries represents as new, disastrous, final attacks on the Faith. It may be the new psychology; it may be comparative religion; it may be relativity; it may be crude materialism; it may be Bolshevism. The historian . . . has watched these new, disastrous and final forces break too often on generation after generation to get unduly excited (*Essays in Orthodox Dissent* p. 34).

In an age dominated by materialistic utopias and existential despair, we look forward to the City with foundations, whose architect and builder is God, conscious that he is not ashamed to be called our God for he has prepared this City for us.

In a civilization witnessing the trembling foundations of Rome, Athens and Babylon, we thank God that we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken.

In a time of crises when men's hearts are failing them for fear, Cyprian speaks for all Christians: 'We want to stand upright amid the ruins of this world, and not lie on the ground with those who have no hope!'

Finding, Following, Keeping, Struggling, is he sure to bless?
Saints, Apostles, Prophets, Martyrs, answer — YES!

References

- ¹ Van Til has done us great service in his expositions of this motif in the Fall.
- ² Positivism, in its various forms, refers to a scientific methodology concerned with 'facts' that can be measured or demonstrated. It discounts or excludes matters that are religious, non-material or subjective. Leopold von Ranke was the leader of this group in its historical application in the last century.
- ³ 'Principled' knowledge, as opposed to 'exhaustive' knowledge, means that in the Bible we are given authoritative and reliable principles for understanding all key aspects of life around us. We did not have to know every item or 'fact' in the cosmos before obtaining a trustworthy grasp of what is the real significance of existence. 'Exhaustive' knowledge constantly returns us to scepticism, because we are never able to gather all the data. See R. Reymond's *The Justification of Knowledge*.
- ⁴ Hesiod — ancient Greek poet. Incidentally, several eastern cultures also held to some form of cyclical theory.
- ⁵ The Biblical word meaning 'once-for-all' is relevant at this point: e.g. 'Christ died for sins once-for-all' (1 Pet 3:18). This demonstrates God's definitive, conclusive action in history. Life is more than a repetitive treadmill.

A famous leader, depressed!

— an exposition of Psalm 42¹

How many in your church suffer from depression? Are you subject to bouts of depression? While admitting that depression is frequently a multi-factoral problem with no easy solution, it is disturbing to see that antidepressant drugs are relied upon so heavily by believers as *the* solution. While they may be part of the modern remedies which God in his providence has provided, they are not the complete answer. Cases of over-medication leading to personality maladjustment and even permanent mental damage have been known.

How wise therefore to explore the Scriptures for light and to apply God's wisdom to those experiencing these problems.

As I read through Psalm 42 I find the following points lead to a complete grasp of the psalm and the subject it unveils.

1. The writer was a man of great spiritual stature.
2. He was deeply distressed by a compounded problem.
3. He was in grave danger because of his condition.
4. He was attempting the right ways of recovery.

1. The writer was a man of great spiritual stature

Occasionally we come across the superficial notion that Christians must of necessity be happy and smiling all the day. The more believers grow in grace and knowledge the more they experience of that quality of spiritual life which constitutes the true joy to which Paul exhorts us all in Philippians 4:4, 'Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!' Yet, as is often the case

in spiritual matters, there is a tension. When there is a depth of spiritual understanding and experience there is a greater spiritual sensitivity. There is no greater grief to the godly than the loss of the sense of God's gracious presence and the light of his countenance. By his grace all kinds of dangers can be faced but who dares go forward without his favour? The most joyful are also subject to the most intense spiritual struggles; hence our Lord, Job, Jeremiah, and, according to the best expositors, Paul in Romans 7.

The great spiritual stature of this writer can be seen in the intense soul thirst that is expressed in the opening verse:

*As the deer pants for streams of water,
So my soul pants for you, O God.
My soul thirsts for God, for the living God
When can I go and meet with God?*

A strong longing of this kind reveals a deep love for God. Can we say that our souls long for and thirst for the Lord like this? And what of our assemblies? Is there a spiritual appetite, an intense desire to worship and to meet with our living God? Jesus said, 'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled' (Mt 5:6). There is no righteousness to be compared to that which constituted the whole life and atoning death of the Lord Messiah our Righteousness one of whose names is *The LORD Our Righteousness*. The best spirituality that we ever experience is to love Christ's righteousness and to seek to be clothed with it by faith.

Who was the writer of this psalm? John Waite at a Carey Conference for ministers, in a memorable exposition on the psalms, stressed the importance of

observing the brief introductions which preface many of them. This one declares, 'For the director of music. A *maskil* of the Sons of Korah'. The word *maskil* denotes a poem which teaches, set to music. The reference to leading the procession to the house of God (verse 4) and the sense of banishment leads most commentators to opt for Davidic authorship and believe that the ordeal described approximates to that experienced by David when he had to flee from Jerusalem at the time of insurrection led by his own son Absalom. Leupold helpfully discusses the authorship question and while he does not himself suggest it, it is probable that the Sons of Korah arranged the musical setting and composition for David's words.

The mature spirituality of the author is seen not only in his intense thirst for God, but in the premium he placed upon the public worship of God. Love of God's house is of the essence of true piety.² Verse 4, referring to the festive throng, is reminiscent of Psalm 87, 'The LORD loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob'.

2. The psalmist was deeply distressed by a compounded problem

There are many reasons why a soul can be distressed or depressed. William Bridge expounds capably on these: great sins, weak grace, miscarriage of duties, lack of assurance, temptation, desertion, affliction, unserviceableness, discouragements — seeking to lift the soul up in each case. John Durant expounds on the themes of distress due to inward corruption, falls into sin, ignorance, indisposition to duty, spiritual decline, the vaunting of our enemies (see verse 10), physical illness and divine displeasure. It is this last subject, divine displeasure, that reminds us that we need to look carefully at the psalm to locate the problem. It was not simple, just as causes of soul's

distress today are not simple. There were several factors which compounded the distress and made it intense and agonizing.

Lying at the very root of the psalmist's distress was his sense of DESERTION. Communion with God forms the very foundation of the Christian life. There was an inner separation from God which grieved him acutely. His normal relationship had been disturbed. He was prevented from going to the sanctuary. He lamented that. But the problem was essentially one in which he felt that he was cut off from the Lord's good pleasure. The picture of the deer trembling all over in the struggle to survive because of thirst is appropriate. There was a sense of desperate urgency in the soul of the psalmist. The problem was compounded by the experience of reproach and taunts of his enemies.

*Why must I go about mourning,
oppressed by the enemy?
My bones suffer mortal agony
as my foes taunt me,
saying to me all day long,
'Where is your God?'*

There is no remission. The oppression felt is constant. The acute feeling of reproach is incessant.

The combination of his human dilemmas and the gloating of his enemies compounded by the major problem of his spiritual desertion — all this serves to draw from his soul the cry of anguish, 'my bones suffer mortal agony'. Unquestionably the worst aspect of all is the chastisement of the Holy Spirit.

*'Deep calls to deep in the roar of your
waterfalls:
all your waves and breakers have swept
over me.'*

The word waterfalls can be translated 'cataracts' (RSV). The KJV uses the term waterspouts which is picturesque,

but the idea denoted is one of being whirled around and buffeted by torrents or floods of tribulation. The flood is used in the O.T. as a metaphor for overwhelming evil. 'The floods of ungodliness' (Ps 18:4 A.S.V.). 'When you pass through the waters, I will be with you' (Is 43:2). I remember a time when I was swimming off the Natal coast. The breakers were unusually high. My concentration lapsed. Caught unawares and being severely somersaulted my only thought was to regain readiness for the next wave, because they come so quickly. One deep source of trial calls to another and all conspire to drown the soul in trouble.

*Deep to deep incessant calling,
Tossed by furious tempest roll,
Endless waves and billows falling,
Overwhelm my fainting soul.
Yet I see a Power presiding
Midst the tumult of the storm,
Ever ruling, ever guiding,
Love's intentions to perform,
Yes, midst sorrows most distressing
Faith contemplates thy design,
Humbly bowing and confessing
All the waves and billows THINE.³*

The last line of the above attributes all woe to him who orders all things. Those who appreciate the truth of God's sovereignty often have the greatest difficulties with the question, Why? Why did he allow this to happen? That is the theme of the book of Job. Job and his friends all failed in their search for the reason. The Lord is just, even when a just man suffers. None was like Christ for he was just and perfect yet he suffered more than anyone ever has. God's justice cannot be impugned in the matter.

The psalmist experienced many tears, he had no desire for food. 'My tears have been my food day and night' (verse 3). The first time Spurgeon preached at the Royal Surrey Gardens Music Hall, a panic was deliberately created by

opponents. In the stampede eight were killed and many injured. Spurgeon was overwhelmed with grief and for several days believed that he would never be able to preach again, while his enemies reproached him and hated him.

In 1527, some 10 years after the initiation of the Reformation, Luther experienced a similar *anfechtung* to that which had plagued him in the years leading up to his conversion. *Anfechtung* is a German word which has no equivalent in English. It is all the doubt, turmoil, pang, tremor, panic, despair, desolation, and desperation which invade the spirit of man!⁴

In 1527 Luther wrote, 'For more than a week I was close to the gates of death and hell. I trembled in all my members. Christ was wholly lost. I was shaken by desperation and blasphemy of God'.⁵ In his later years Luther was pushed beyond his endurance and committed blunders in his impatience with the peasants and the Jews. The enemies of the gospel highly exploited the errors of church leaders who are often, due to the pressures under which they come, given to depression.

3. The psalmist was in grave danger because of his condition

When a person is destabilised judgment becomes clouded and disastrous decisions can be made. It is rightly said that pastors should never attempt any serious decisions on a Monday. When depression sets in callous and erroneous judgments can so easily be made concerning the local church, churches in general, or God's people in particular. Spectacles can be obtained today that help to make everything look brighter, but depression is like wearing glasses that make everything look gloomy. Says Richard Sibbes, 'Sinking under afflictions never yields any good fruit. It hinders us both from and in holy duties'.⁶

When there is an overwhelming feeling of desertion or defeat a person can then become easy prey to all kinds of extreme sin from blasphemy to adultery and or suicide. If a believer is tormented by desertion and inward conflict he can easily become prey to distorted and rebellious thoughts about God. Note Luther's confession concerning blasphemy. The writer of the Psalm 73 confesses that he was on the verge of making the most crude God-dishonouring conclusions but was wonderfully cured when in the sanctuary he was reminded of the latter end of the ungodly.

The situation of danger for the person severely depressed is made worse by the Adversary as he seeks to exploit the situation. Those in the condition of Psalm 42 are a danger to themselves, to their families, and to the church. When a man's spirit is jaundiced all his opinions and judgments tend to be jaundiced too.

4. He was following the correct way of recovery

A truly spiritual man who is distressed and depressed will admit the dangers of his position, readily confess his sinfulness, and try hard to follow ways by which he can recover.

When all else fails the believer must rely on his covenant relationship. 'He is my Saviour and my God' (verse 11).

With the new and everlasting covenant as our basis we can plead the promises and intercede with vigour. This is expressed well from the end of verse 8. From that point onwards the psalm is a remonstrance, an urgent pleading. Psalm 43 is a continuation of Psalm 42. Wisely the Holy Spirit separated it as we have enough to digest in Psalm 42. The argument and remonstrating, the reasoning and pleading intensify in Psalm 43 and crystallise in outright specific petition: 'vindicate me — plead my cause — rescue me'.

Despite his weakness, and like Jacob wrestling with the angel of the Lord at Peniel, the Psalmist shows tenacity. He determines to hold on in prayer. Prayer is God's perennial gift to us. It is always there. Jesus said to his disciples that they should always pray and not give up (Lk 18:1). 'Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need' (Heb 4:16).

Psalm 88 is almost all an expression of despair, provided to show that all experiences are described in the psalms. By comparison, Psalms 42 and 43 show a determination to use the means of grace to recover. Twice the psalmist declares, 'I remember' (verses 4 and 5).

Past mercies are recalled to stir up renewed efforts at prayer. Also to be noted is the work of reasoning and self-exhortation with which both psalms conclude. 'Why, O my soul, are you downcast, why so disturbed?' Prayer must be mixed with faith. 'I will yet praise him, my Saviour and my God'. He is specific in his requests. He asks for light and truth (43:3), and by that means he requests a return to Jerusalem (43:3).

Those suffering from melancholia need gentle and patient treatment. Those who are too weak or depressed to pray for themselves should seek those who will pray with them. Much gentleness, wisdom and patience is needed when counselling distressed souls. However if such believers show some of the healthy signs of spiritual appetite and love for God (43:4) as is expressed in these psalms the prospect for recovery is bright.

References

- ¹ This material formed the basis of a sermon preached at Belvidere Road Church, Liverpool on Sunday morning, 10th August, 1986.
- ² W. S. Plumer, *Psalms*, p. 499.
- ³ This verse by Henry March is quoted in Spurgeon's *Treasury of David*, vol. 2, p. 317.

The first Pretoria Ministers' Conference – July 1986

A report by Brian Darroll

The Musaion hall of the Pretoria University was the venue for the first Evangelical and Reformed ministers' conference in Pretoria. The time was 2nd to 4th July, just a week before the annual family conference at Skogheim in Natal which has the same description 'Evangelical and Reformed'.

The design of the Pretoria conference was to reach out to an extensive constituency of ministers in the Transvaal. This can be done without any adverse effect on the Natal conference at Skogheim. A great deal depends on the immensely powerful Dutch Reformed Church who up to this time have been notorious for keeping strictly to themselves. The benefits of mutual fellowship are rich and this was demonstrated by the invaluable contribution given by two ministers of the Afrikaans churches and by the fellowship of those who attended.

There are acute problems in organising a conference of this nature and it is to be

hoped that the advantages gained will be fully used to promote and build up this gathering as an annual event. If the Afrikaans ministers are generous and patronise the conference well without destroying its truly 'Reformed Ecumenical' character by taking it over (as they have the power to do), then the possibilities for good are enormous. Without being too simplistic it is right to observe that the key to all South Africa's problems is communication. If those who enjoy the boundless advantages of the Reformed faith share together and work together it will be an example to countless others.

Pastor Martin Holdt and the Reformed Baptist Church which he leads are to be congratulated for the vision and hard work of initiating what we pray will become a spiritual powerhouse of the future.

The nine sessions were very ably handled by the three South African and two overseas speakers. Four of the nine expositions were historical in character, the desire

⁴ Roland Bainton, *Here I Stand*, Lion edition, p. 42.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 361

⁶ *Works*, vol. 7, p. 53.

read for themselves, *The Soul's Conflict with Itself* (volume 1, page 130) and *Discouragement's recovery* (vol. 7, page 51).

Bibliography

Psalm 42 was a favourite with the Puritan pastors who were famous as physicians of the soul. William Bridge preached 13 sermons on Psalm 42. In 1648 his works were printed in five volumes. In 1961 the Banner of Truth reprinted *A Lifting up for the Downcast*. Also using Psalm 42 as his basis John Durant in his book explored eight reasons which cause depression. Richard Sibbes majored on Psalm 42 and those privileged to possess his works in seven priceless volumes can

A. A. Alexander's *Thoughts on Religious Experience* and the classic by Thomas Brooks, *Precious Remedies against Satan's devices*, both by the Banner, are valuable books. For republication publishers should look at Robert Bolton's *Instructions for a right comforting of Afflicted Consciences*, and by Joseph Symonds, *The Case and Cure of a Deserted Soul*. *The Genius of Puritanism* by Peter Lewis (Carey), has a major section on counselling those in distress. Contemporary books by Joy Adams were reviewed in *R.T.* 15.

being to cast as much light from the past on the present as possible.

Professor Douglas MacMillan (in Church history) of the Free Church of Scotland, Edinburgh, was the first speaker. He had to deal with the complex subject, 'Why did the Reformation change a politically explosive European continent?'

In answering the question, 'How was the political situation changed without bloodshed?', Professor MacMillan gave us three reasons. Firstly, the Bible was returned to the people. It was made available in the common tongue and adhered to in preaching. Secondly, there was a return to the biblical doctrine of salvation — justification by faith alone and by grace alone — so that the work of Christ was seen to be the only basis of salvation. Thirdly the practical results of salvation in human living, such as upright, honest, godly lives, renewed interpersonal relationships, produced new political standpoints, and so on.

An excellent foundational background was laid for his next paper 'John Calvin and the story of the Huguenots'. Here we were treated to a picture of John Calvin that was certainly new to many of the fifty or so ministers and interested laymen present. Calvin is well-known as pastor, as preacher, even as theologian. But here we were introduced to Calvin the missionary, and Calvin the trainer of ministers and missionaries. Many have misrepresented Calvin's doctrine of election to deny any theology of mission. But God works through means and the gospel must be taken to all. The results of that preaching will display who the elect are. We were further given a picture of an emerging church that grew under extreme persecution, a church that grew in some twenty years to embrace three million members (about 15% of the population of France at that time), assembling in 2,150 separate congregations. The pastors for these churches came predominantly from Geneva and were personally taught and trained by Calvin and his associates. We were informed that from 1541 onwards between 1,200 and 1,500 went through the Genevan 'missionary training centre'.

In view of the fierceness of the persecution in France the selection of men suitable for

the ministry was extremely strict. Before a man was allowed to enter the course of strict, thorough and formal training he had to display: (1) Solid common sense, evidenced in many practical ways. (2) He had to be unusually courageous — there was no place here for the timid. (3) He needed a good ability to communicate what the Bible says. (4) He had to remain unaffected by both praise and criticism. (5) Supremely he had to be totally dedicated to Christ — his life was on the line. (I wonder what would happen to ministerial candidates today if such qualifications were applied!)

Professor MacMillan's final paper, which brought the conference to a close, was an hour-and-a-half epic on 'John Knox and the cleansing of a nation'. We were treated to the exciting history of John Knox in a clear and refreshing way. Oh that man today would preach Christ so clearly that ordinary men and women would come to him and be changed, that leaders would tremble before Christ and his claims, that politics would be transformed from man-pleasing antics to God-pleasing ways!

Erroll Hulse was the other overseas, though hardly foreign, speaker. The venue of the Pretoria University Campus was very much a home-coming for him, this being where he obtained his degree in architecture. Pastor Hulse also presented three papers, 'Reformation and the public worship of God', 'Martin Luther: three triumphs and three mistakes', and 'Justification by faith — the basis of Christian unity'.

In his first paper on worship, Pastor Hulse dealt with the challenge of the charismatics with their emphasis on a second experience after conversion, their belief in the restoration of the spectacular gifts, and their concept of 'contemporary' worship. In examining these matters we were led back to the regulative principle of what is not expressly commanded in Scripture is forbidden. On the positive side it was again clearly stressed that one cannot worship what one does not know. Worship must therefore be God-centred and centred in the revealed God of the Bible.

In dealing with Martin Luther's triumphs and mistakes, it was refreshing to be able to see that, great though men like Luther are,



A group of those who attended the conference. For further photos see back inside cover.

they are not supernatural. They are human and make mistakes just as we all do. Be these mistakes small and relatively insignificant, or be they large and far-reaching they can never prevent God from achieving his purposes.

The mistakes outlined for us were firstly Luther's intransigence at the conference at Marburg. When the Protestants agreed substantially it was vital for them to be united, but Luther's strong point of no compromise became his weak point. He failed to see that he was dealing with friends rather than enemies. Another error was Luther's loss of patience with the peasants. He was guilty of intemperate language which only did harm and no good. Like Abraham he repeated his folly (besetting sin) when he again lost patience with the Jews, his intemperate language having been held against him ever since. Under extreme provocation Christians have no right ever to forsake the example of Christ. Indeed patience in times of stress can turn out to be the very means of victory just when it seemed that such was impossible.

Martin Luther made many more mistakes than were highlighted for us, but God used

this man to achieve great things in spite of all his mistakes, and in each case God overruled for his own glory. So we see that God uses us in spite of our weakness that the glory may belong to him alone.

Erroll Hulse's paper on 'Justification by faith — the basis for Christian unity', was illustrated by the very variety of people attending the conference. Free Church of Scotland, Baptist, Congregational, English Reformed, Church of England, Gereformeerde Kerk, N.G. Kerk, Presbyterian, Independent, yet all declaring a real unity.

Pastor Hulse took up the suggestion of Prof. Donald MacLeod (*Evangel*, Autumn 1985) that the real source or dynamic of Christian unity is not a doctrinal creed (although creeds are inevitable and important), but the body of Christ as expressed for instance in Ephesians 4:4-6. What right have we to insist on justification by faith? The answer suggested was that the apostle Paul insisted on this in the Epistle to the Galatians, and according to Romans the body defined as 'in Christ' (Paul's favourite term) is that body clothed with Christ's righteousness and hence justified.

The Rev. Clive Tyler, principal of the Bible Institute in Kalk Bay, dealt with 'Andrew Murray and revival'. Having been used by God and having seen the results of God's revival Andrew Murray seems to have gone astray in the well-intentioned desire of repeating the blessings of true revival through human means. This led him into many unfortunate errors which marred his later life, so much so that the good of his early years tends to be overlooked as people are warned against his errors. Yet in spite of all this, Andrew Murray was a godly man who truly sought God's best for his people. The lesson we need to learn from his mistake is that we must do God's work in God's way. No matter how great our desire for revival, no matter how great the need for revival, we dare not, we may not attempt to counterfeit God's work. God pours out his Spirit in revival in his own good time. We must in prayer and in preaching expect and prepare for it, but we cannot simulate conditions that will of themselves reproduce this purely divine phenomenon.

Ds. Marius Schalekamp of the Gereformeerde Kerk, Primrose, presented an excellent paper on 'The Christian and his self-image'. He dealt specifically with the minister and his personal problems. Having outlined a fictitious case-study of a minister faced with an enormous work load, feelings of guilt because of his inability to cope with his many and varied responsibilities, his frustration with himself and with God, etc., Ds. Schalekamp then led us in a discussion of this man and his problem. We were helped to look beyond the superficial, outward symptoms to the real cause of the problem, namely a wrong attitude towards God. By the very nature of the case the handling of this case-study could only be in very general terms, however, the basic principle was outlined that people must see themselves as they are — sinners — and then see themselves before God in Christ in order to develop a true self-image.

The other local speaker was Ds. Flip Buys of the Gereformeerde Kerk, Vereeniging, now labouring in Sharpeville. His subject was, 'The doctrines of grace and race rela-

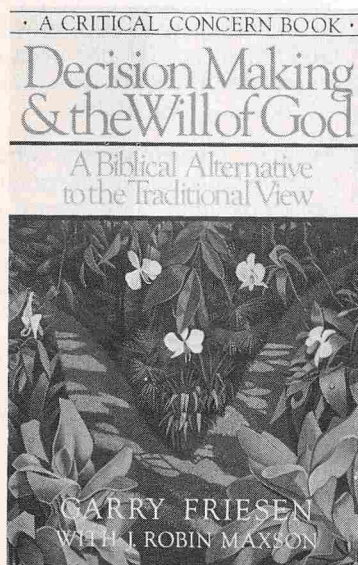
tions' — a highly relevant subject to the South African scene, but also relevant to all people everywhere for, since Babel, none of us is free from the taint of racial prejudice. Ds. Buys took each of the five points of Calvinism, expounded them briefly so that their meaning was clear and then proceeded to apply them to the attitude of racial prejudice. So in considering the total depravity of man I cannot say another person is worse than me for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. In considering unconditional election, I cannot think of myself as more important than another, for by grace are you saved. In Particular redemption I cannot limit Christ's work to those I choose, for God has chosen a great multitude which no man can number from every tribe and nation and people and tongue. In considering Irresistible grace, I must take the gospel boldly to all, for Jesus, if he be lifted up, will draw all men to him. I cannot think of another human as being beneath or beyond the scope of the grace of God. And when I consider the doctrine of the Perseverance of the saints I rejoice in the knowledge that I equally with my brothers and sisters of other races and colour and language am being kept and prepared to occupy the new earth in perfect harmony and unity together.

It was encouraging to hear at the conference that Ds. Buys left a strong church of 600 members to be a pastor to Black people in an area which has been subject to great unrest. It was said that the Black people would never accept a white, certainly never an Afrikaaner! That was to forget that our Black friends have far more discernment than we think and are renowned for knowing sincerity when they see it and recognising hypocrisy when they see it.

It is hoped that every encouragement will be given to the organisers so that they will plan early and make thorough preparations with a very attractive and relevant selection of subjects for next year. It will be a source of enrichment and encouragement for even a greater diversity of races and denominations to confer together and strengthen each other.

The way of Wisdom, or the Still Small Voice?

A review article



Does God have a will for my life? This is a radical reappraisal of many commonly held beliefs about God's will and how to find it. God's *sovereign* will is his secret and certain plan for us and mankind. His *moral* will is the revelation of his ethical requirements in Scripture. But the notion of the *third* will – an individual will for my life, a detailed 'CV' in advance which I can and must discover, is challenged by Friesen in a masterly series of arguments, built up from Scripture and clearly laid out in diagrammatic form.

Part One outlines in detail the 'Traditional View' of this 'Individual Will' of God. It is summarised in this way:

Decision making and the Will of God

Gary Friesen with J. Robin Maxsen

£6.45 paperback

Multnomah Press, Portland, Oregon
97266.

Available through Puritan Reformed,
Evangelical Press, or Christian
Bookstores.

Listening to God

Joyce Hugget

Hodder & Stoughton. Paperback. 240 pp.

1986. £2.25

Principles of Decision Making: The Traditional View

Premise: For each of our decisions God has a perfect plan or will

Purpose: The goal of the believer is to discover God's individual will (find the 'dot') and make decisions in accordance with it

Process: The believer interprets the inner impressions and outward signs through which the Holy Spirit communicates his leading

Proof: The confirmation that one has correctly discerned the individual will of God comes from an inner sense of peace and outward (successful) results of the decision

Part Two refutes the arguments for an 'Individual Will' of God, showing that they cannot be supported by any reason, experience, biblical example, or biblical teaching. 'At no point in Scripture do we read of a believer asking "What is God's individual will for me in this matter?" ... Today we commonly hear people say "I did thus and such because I knew it was God's will for me" or "I felt in my heart God wanted me to do it". The apostles often gave reasons for their decisions but not in such terms.' There is detailed consideration of the passage most often cited in support of the traditional view, Friesen concluding that while they are helpful in the guidance of the believer, they do not prove guidance by means of an Individual Will of God. The implications of this are exhilarating, as they serve to liberate believers from the following problems:

- (a) Individual Christians may become totally obsessed with discovering God's individual will for them, e.g. where they should live. They hunt and hunt for guidance and certainty. They may subsequently become severely depressed at their failure in discernment — if perhaps they had become convinced that God's will for them was so-and-so and it did not happen, what went wrong?

Similarly, churches can become convinced of the need to discover God's individual will for them. We often hear of congregations seeking THE man of God's choice, as if in the whole world there is only one person suitable and qualified to serve them, that if somehow they miss God's man they will be 'out of God's will'. Seeking God's leading in such a case becomes very awkward when group discussions have to be made, if, as the traditional view maintains, the Spirit does make the individual will of God

known. Should there be unanimity of opinion before proceeding with any decision? Friesen describes one church meeting he attended where one person said in all sincerity: 'We can vote now ... I have talked with several others here who are earnestly seeking God's perfect will in this matter. Apparently the Holy Spirit has told some of us vote "yes" and some of us to vote "no"!'. Such is the dilemma of those who believe they have to discover what God has already decided upon in his secret will, and that if they miss the 'dot' it is irretrievable.

- (b) Another problem arises when coping with equally valid options. Insistence upon the existence of only *one* correct choice generates anxiety over 'missing the dot' rather than gratitude for more than one fine opportunity.
- (c) Immature Christians may announce with great sincerity that they have discovered God's individual will for them — while all around can see how manifestly inappropriate it is. The problem becomes embarrassing when Christians justify foolish behaviour by announcing that it was God's decision, not theirs.
- (d) The traditional view 'appeals only to subjective sources of knowledge and thus is denied the possibility of objective certainty in finding God's will'. The problem will *always* rear up — are 'Impressions' really authoritative?
- (e) It is often taught that one should not make a decision until one is certain of the Lord's direction. This can serve to excuse common indecisiveness, and eventually circumstances may force the issue. Immature Christians may even be grateful that circumstances have

made a sticky decision 'for them' — an 'opting out' akin to putting out fleeces!

Doesn't God have a will for my life then? Yes he does! And one that is described in the Bible in terms that we can fully understand and apply. This is explained in Part Three: 'The Way of Wisdom'.

Friesen shows in detail how assurance of God's *sovereign will* plus his revealed *moral will* are alone *fully adequate* for our decision making needs. The Holy Spirit *does* indwell the believer to illumine the truth, but this is guidance into God's *moral will*, into an understanding of the principles of Scripture and an increasing heart-desire to live in accordance with them. Friesen shows that in areas specifically addressed by the Bible its principles are to be obeyed, while in non-moral decisions the believer is free and responsible to choose his own path of action. He will, of course, aim to make wise decisions on the basis of spiritual expediency.

Biblical examples of decision-making according to the 'way of wisdom' are cited. We find the apostles explaining their plans in terms such as: 'We thought it best,' 'I thought it necessary,' 'If it is fitting,' 'It is not desirable,' 'It seemed good,' and simply 'I have decided!'

For some, the elimination of 'inner leadings' from the decision-making process points to an academic science of 'common-sense' living which precludes a relationship with the Personal Living God. In chapter 15, 'Guidance is Personal', the author vigorously and effectively refutes this gross misunderstanding of 'The Way of Wisdom'. God is personally and thoroughly involved at every level of decision making; a dozen or so arguments advanced to support and explain this.

Finally in Part Four, 'Deciding the Big Ones', Friesen applies the 'Way of

Wisdom' to the areas of Singleness, Marriage, Vocation, Mission, Giving, and dealing with differences with fellow Christians. This work deals essentially with making specific choices between alternative courses. 'Promptings' and 'Impressions' do *not* form a legitimate basis for decisions in such matters. 'Decision Making' is somewhat different to 'Guidance' — the far more general and far-ranging aspect of Christian experience, in which he is guided into areas of life or attitudes to be transformed.

Professor John Murray has a four-page article on guidance which is published in his collected writings volume one, page 186. Prof Murray declares that direct impressions or convictions by the Holy Spirit 'amount, in effect, to the same thing as to believe that the Holy Spirit gives special revelation'. Here he is dealing with the danger of those who say, 'The Lord told me this, or that!' Certainly room must be made for the person of the Holy Spirit to impress subjects or leadings or convictions which are biblical upon our hearts, and when he does that we must refrain from claiming that we are special recipients of divine illumination. The brevity of Professor Murray's work is its weakness, Friesen's strength is the detail and thoroughness of his analysis.

J. E. Adams in his book, *More than Redemption*, has a chapter with the title, 'Counselling and Special Revelation' (pp. 16-37). Adams is impatient with 'feelings' and 'urges'. He says, 'I shall not take time to discuss the futility of trying to determine God's will by means of *feelings, urges, deep convictions, peace and leadings*. Behind each are unrecognised *reasons*. Sometimes they are biblical, sometimes they are not; sometimes they are noble, often they are not. One must get back to these reasons in counselling to analyse and evaluate them according to biblical

CAREY FAMILY CONFERENCE Gloucester July 1986

About twenty churches were represented at the Gloucester College of Art and Technology for the annual family conference. This year Trinity Baptist Church at Gloucester carried out the essential background organisation and looked after the children's programmes.

Peter Parkinson was conference coordinator and kept things moving with a unique blend of humour and common sense. The main speakers were Russell Williams and David Kingdon with Kingsley Coomber and Robert Oliver as visiting speakers. The conference was another refreshing opportunity for renewing Christian fellowship, grasping hold of solid teaching, accepting spiritual challenges and enjoying a good rest. As long as the family conference provides these ingredients in a correct balance and at the right price, there will always be a demand for this type of holiday.

An added attraction was a visit to the historic sites in Gloucester with particular reference to George Whitefield.

The same venue has been booked for 3rd-8th August next year with a wider scope with facilities for caravans and tents. It is hoped to organise a Northern conference, 27th July-1st August.

Andrew Symonds

The forthcoming **Carey Conference** for ministers — LIVERPOOL 6th-8th January 1987

Speakers: John Blanchard, Dr Don Carson (U.S.A.), Donald MacLeod, Don Garlington, Erroll Hulse, Geoff Thomas

Theme: Justification by faith

Details available from John Rubens, 10 Glebe Road, WELWYN, Herts. AL6 9PB

principles. Anything less than this results in decision-making that shifts with whims and weather — or worse than that! And what a tragedy when such decisions are stamped with divine approval and claimed as *God's leading*! Adams then goes on to provide practical advice.

Listening to God Joyce Huggett

We refer to a book published this year, which will undoubtedly find its way into the hands of many church members. It is a persuasive and dangerous mixture of truth and error. Mrs Huggett is dealing essentially with prayer as a 'technique', arguing mainly from experience but also the flimsiest of biblical exegesis that prayer should consist as much of 'listening to God' as 'speaking to God'. Essentially she holds that God's way of speaking to us cannot be limited to Scripture, and that

believers need to devote much time to silent meditation (perhaps broken by suitable musical items, conveniently listed at the back of the book) during which God will reveal his will through personal messages (like a shepherd murmuring into the ears of the lamb in his arms). There is no real help given in the huge problem area of distinguishing what may be sheerly subjective or spurious in such 'messages'.

We recommend that church leaders obtain this book to acquaint themselves with its arguments, so that they can see the urgent need to give their congregations *clear* teaching on the sufficiency of Scripture and the inadequacy of impressions, inner feelings, leadings and promptings in the area of guidance. For help in this task we most heartily recommend Murray, Adams, and especially Friesen's work, as described above.

The Greatest Accomplishment

— as expressed by Daniel 9:24

The world is often obsessed with the glory of accomplishment. Sporting heroes are glorified for their victories. Leaders are acclaimed for their successes. Rich men are admired for their enterprise. Yet there is one accomplishment which outshines all others and leaves them in the shade.

Daniel describes the triumph of the Messiah, God's anointed One (Dan 9:24). He describes the achievement that no other could even begin to contemplate, and he does so in six assertions. Jahweh will enable his Anointed One to,

1. Vanquish transgression
2. Put an end to sin
3. Atonement for wickedness
4. Bring in everlasting righteousness
5. Seal up vision and prophecy
6. Become the foundation of the New Temple.

The first three declarations concern victory over the curse of all mankind, namely, sin. No saviour, no philosophy, no remedy has ever been discovered to deal with this plague of plagues. God's Son has come from heaven to earth and has successfully dealt with every aspect of sin. He has dealt with its root, that is rebellion. He changes men's hearts and cures them of the disease of sin. He has removed the guilt of his people (Rom 8:1). He has taken the condemnation due to sinners and has put that in a grave. He has accomplished this by his atoning work. All the sacrifices and offerings of the Old Testament were types pointing to what he would do. 'Christ our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed' (1 Cor 5:7). 'By one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy' (Heb 10:14). Daniel 9:27 predicts that the Messiah would put an end to sacrifice and offering.

Certainly sin is the enemy that has caused death and hell. To conquer so formidable a foe is surely *the* all-time greatest accomplishment. It is appropriate that the first three declarations above should be devoted to that triumph. Yet while the next three are different, each describes something quite unique, and something which only the God-man could achieve.

Note that clause 4 describes 'righteousness' as everlasting. Luther in his anguished search for righteousness discovered the meaning of imputed righteousness first in the psalms and then in Romans. Isaiah is a rich source of

references to God's provision of righteousness for his people (Is 51:8; 54:17). Jeremiah declares that one of his names is 'The LORD Our Righteousness' (Jer 23:6). In fulfilment of Daniel's prophecy the Messiah brought in everlasting righteousness for us. This consists of his perfect life. In his youth, in the home, at work, in his life before men and God, he fulfilled every requirement of God's holy law. What an accomplishment! No one else could have achieved that! In the unique holiness of his manhood, united as it was with his eternal deity, he alone could bring us righteousness.

We come now to declaration number 5. The same Hebrew word 'seal' is used as in clause one. Transgression is laid under a seal. The idea is that God has dealt with it once and for all and there is no more room or place for it.

When Daniel states that the vision and prophecy will be sealed, he means that when the substance or body of that prophetic vision is complete it is laid under a seal. 'Prophecies and prophets are sealed, when by the full realisation of all prophecies prophecy ceases, no prophets any more appear'.¹ The emphasis in each of the six declarations is on perfect and complete fulfilment. Nothing is left half done.

With the accomplishment of the Messiah came the testimony of prophecy by which the accomplishment is described and explained. Like Daniel the apostle John lived to an advanced age. Daniel had been 68 years in captivity in Babylon when he began earnestly to plead the promises of restoration made through Jeremiah. John lived beyond the date of AD70 and the destruction of Jerusalem prophesied in Daniel 9:26. Everything required to complete the exposition of the Christ was written by John. The Bible ends with the apocalypse (apocalypse is that which relates to the destruction of the world, but it also means to reveal). John is to the N.T. what Daniel was to the O.T. The way in which Scripture concludes with the revelation given to John is a perfect conclusion to the Bible. It is fitting that John ends with a warning not to attempt to add anything further (22:18).

The last promise, number 6, I take to be the anointing of the Messiah himself. He has become to the whole Church what the Temple was to the O.T. believers. That too is an accomplishment of superlative proportions. He is the foundation, and he is the Temple (Eph 2:19-22; 1 Pet 2:4-8; Mic 4:1; Is 2:2). The old order with its physical Temple is demolished entirely. The new order has been established with no provision lacking.

Who can compare to our illustrious Saviour who has accomplished all this for us? Let us worship, adore and serve him only, and seek to share with others his fame and the wonder of his unique accomplishment for sinners.

¹ Keil-Delitzsch, *Daniel*, p. 344. Douglas Judisch in his 'An evaluation of claims to the Charismatic gifts' devotes a chapter to the explicit testimony of Daniel.



The Pretoria Conference

Shown above (on the left) Ds. Filippus Buys and Ds. Marius Schalekamp, of the Dutch Reformed Church, who enriched the conference with their ministries (see report).

David Cowan at the book table.

Shown below, Clive Tyler (on the left) and Prof. Douglas MacMillan.



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