

REFORMATION TODAY



(see inside front cover)

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Front cover picture

Joy is reflected in the faces of the young people of the gipsy church in Palma, Majorca, Spain. There has been a spiritual awakening among gipsy communities in several parts of Europe. Pastor Joaquin Ranero is pastor of a Reformed Baptist church in Palma. He is featured above (on the right) with the pastor of the gipsy church in Palma. Pastor Ranero was asked to give weekly expository teaching to the gipsy church. He warned them that they would find it difficult to accept the meat of the doctrines of grace. They did find it very difficult. However both preacher and hearers persevered and in due course they have come to embrace the teachings. They now call themselves the New Reformed Church and have a meeting place in a red light part of central Palma, a most appropriate place for the gospel which transforms lives to be sounded out. Once a fortnight the two churches unite for a Lord's Day service. It was the editor's privilege to preach in both churches recently. He was encouraged to observe the hunger for biblical exposition as well as to enjoy the exuberant singing for which the people have a natural talent.

Pastor Ranero has worked in union with the European Missionary Fellowship for many years. E.M.F. is a crucial work linking up churches all over Europe in advancing the gospel in a variety of practical ways, but especially in encouraging church planting. Students are trained at Welwyn. Several young men from the gipsy church evidence the gifts necessary for the ministry and will need to undergo training. Co-operation in literature distribution is one way in which we can work together to advance the cause of truth in Europe. We are at present co-operating with E.M.F. with regard to Poland and the distribution of the 1689 Confession of Faith in Polish among the churches there.

Few realise how desperately weak the churches are in Europe today or how great is the need for promulgating the gospel in countries like Italy, France, Portugal, Spain and Greece. These nations represent a spiritual wilderness compared with countries like Brazil and Nigeria and other parts of Africa and South America. E.M.F. publishes a bi-monthly paper 'The Vision of Europe', which provides up to date news of courageous church planting work in Europe. The E.M.F. address is Guessens, 6 Codicote Road, WELWYN, Herts.

Editorial

Shepherding God's Flock

The rediscovery of the Reformed doctrines in the 1960s was followed by a renewed interest in Reformed practice within local churches. The publication of the paperback *The Ideal Church* (Carey Publications, 1972), reflected a deep desire to establish ideal churches which maintain discipline, provide for the needs of children in our churches, and have missionary zeal. Using materials from the Carey conference for ministers 'Local Church Practice', a paperback of twelve chapters was published in 1978. This book included a fine work by Dick Eccles on discipline in the local church.

Embracing the truth is one thing, implementing that truth in practice is another. The new book *Shepherding God's Flock*, reviewed by Dean Olive in this issue of *R.T.* has eleven chapters. 'Local Church Practice' majors on reformation. This new book continues along that line but concentrates on the manner in which we are to carry forward reformation. The work is essentially practical concentrating not on issues of reformation and discipline but much more on the manner in which we are to conduct discipline.

As in preaching it is important that we apply the materials of this new book to ourselves. We should avoid complacency and an attitude which is content to apply lessons to others.

One senses that the book is a caution against the abuse of authority. Where injustice has taken place we must leave the door open for healing, for repentance, and for restitution, if the latter applies. The chapter on interdependency or association by John Thornbury is particularly relevant. Most churches in the present day Reformed Baptist movement are independent. No forum exists to mediate if there is division among them. This is tragic. It is a denial of the very nature of Christianity which is the only viable healing body in the world. The genius of Christianity is its doctrine of repentance. Repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ brings salvation. That is followed by love and unity with all fellow believers and the pursuit of a peaceable attitude to all men.

Clear headings for preaching sermons

Today we hear reports that churches which do not have trained pastors suffer from preaching unworthy of the name, presentations which are vague and wishy washy, full of stories and destitute of exposition. To combat this trend there has in Reformed circles in particular grown a healthy practice to employ clear headings and sometimes sub-headings.

There is nothing new in this because many Puritan preachers used outlines listing doctrines and applications which they called 'uses'. Sometimes by the weak standards of our day we judge that the Puritans used too many headings. It is easy to caricature the Puritans. Rather we should remember

that most of the Puritans provided clear headings for their sermons; bearing in mind that after the midday meal of moderate feasting (so Richard Baxter) on the Lord's day, all members of the family could be catechised as to the sermon, its headings, its doctrines, and its uses. Matthew Henry, J. C. Ryle and Spurgeon were masters in the use of clear, pithy headings, one logically leading to the next; lucid, colourful, helpful, balanced, they were presented simply so a child could remember them easily.

The use of headings and sub-headings is an excellent practice. However it can in some instances be artificial. I have come across a few, and I stress only a few, who will not accept preaching to be preaching unless the substance is presented with mathematical precision and unless it comes packaged in crystal clear compartments, like a plate of food in which not one pea may cross its border to lie with a bean! One great purpose of preaching is to teach the hearers how to think for themselves and not spoonfeed them in such a way that they are never challenged to analyse.

If you have three beautiful flowers and you display each one in turn even the non-botanic among us remember their names, without having additionally to remember which was 1, and which was 2 and which was 3! Those flowers will continue to grow in our gardens perfectly well without number tags!

I had occasion at one time to give a cassette of a heartwarming sermon by Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones to a clear-minded friend and asked him if a certain congregation would tolerate the doctor's style of preaching since it did not have a single heading. He came back later and spoke truthfully when he said the doctor would not be acceptable to the leaders of that congregation on the basis of that sermonic style! Yet it was a sermon full of power! It is one thing to be a good mathematician, a divider of chapters and texts. It is quite another to move the hearts and souls of the hearers. All the headings in the world cannot make up for power in preaching. Yet it is surely much better to go home having heard something of substance presented with a clear outline, even though it was dry, than go home unable for all the world to tell what the speaker was trying to say!

Adequate water in Jerusalem?

Received from Murray Adamthwaite who teaches in the Tahlee Bible College, Australia, is a nine page scholarly article in which he decisively refutes the assertions made by writers like Jay Adams that there was insufficient water in Jerusalem at the time of the apostles for the immersion of believers to be practical. So far 48 miqveh pools similar to our baptismal pools have been discovered dating back to the time of Herod's Temple together with the entire system of water supply. These pools fulfil the Rabbinical stipulation of 47 inches depth to allow total immersion and a minimum of six steps down on each side of the pool. The author has visited the sites in Jerusalem. The article makes fascinating reading which we purpose to present in the next issue.

The First Pioneer Missionary

by *Russell Bridges*

As Christians living in 1989, we are prone to forget the incalculable debt we owe to those who have gone before, to our fathers in the faith. The freedom we enjoy, the opportunities we have, the theological heritage from which we benefit, all these have been won for us through the tireless efforts, self-sacrifice and, at times, martyrdom of our forefathers. Few are remembered by name but then they never sought the praise of men but rather to serve and glorify their heavenly Father. However we can learn much that is of use today from these unsung heroes.

One such character is Raymond Lull (Raimundus Lullus) of whom it has been written 'He was the first person to develop a complete theory of mission based on sound principles of missionary communication, a theory which in some respects has not yet been outdated'.¹ In that sense he can be called the first pioneer missionary. There were many pioneers before Lull but in the sense explained he was, as far as we can tell, the first.

Lull was born in Majorca in 1232, or thereabouts (history in those days was not so concerned with accuracy). His father had sailed in the Armada which, a few years before had recovered the island from the Muslim Moors. He was born into an influential family. As a boy he was a page at the court of the King of Aragon. For the first 30 years of his life led a rather dissolute existence as a young man about court. He was gallant and frivolous, a poet with no particular thought of religion.² It seems that during this time he travelled widely developing in particular a fascination for the Muslim countries of North Africa.

At the age of 32 Lull came to a deep remorse about his sins and was converted. Setting aside some of his property for his wife and children he gave the proceeds to the poor. He studied extensively and learned Arabic. He wrote voluminously. With the aid of the King he established on Majorca a school for the training of missionaries.

Lull wished to see the reformation of the Church and to see it free of luxury and pluralism. His great desire was that Church should set aside its best preachers as missionaries who would be thoroughly equipped with the various languages of the world, surely this is a great priority today! As we would expect Lull looked for those who would support this vision. He sought to influence the heads of the Dominican order but with little success. Later the Dominicans became some of his most bitter critics. The Franciscans proved more friendly and eventually he worked closely with them. Such was Lull's passion to reach others that he obtained royal permission to enter all synagogues and mosques in the realm and preach the Christian Faith.³ How realistic this was in practice is very questionable. Seldom was active work among Muslims possible but both the Dominicans and the Franciscans had extensive works in places like North Africa. We read of the Prince of Morocco in 1229 granting permission to build a Christian Church and giving consent to the baptism of Muslims.³

For 50 years Lull devoted himself wholeheartedly to the task of bringing Muslims to faith in Christ. This has never been an easy task but despite many setbacks and much opposition

Lull never wavered from this single goal. He developed a carefully thought out, threefold theory of mission and we can learn much from the sound practicality of his methods.

1. First he stressed the need for a thorough knowledge of the culture and language of the Muslims. To this end he campaigned tirelessly for the institution of courses in Islamic languages to be taught in the Universities of Europe.³ Lull travelled widely and again and again attempted to persuade Popes and Cardinals to found monastic institutions for the study of languages as a means of preparing missionaries. It was through his efforts that the Universities of Rome, Bologna, Paris, Salamanca and the recently established University at Oxford began teaching these languages.

The idea behind this was twofold. Firstly to teach Christians Islamic culture and languages in preparation for missionary work. Secondly he wanted to bring Muslims to the Christian Universities of Europe to study and then to evangelise them there.

2. His second theory of mission involved the compilation of a 'Complete Handbook of Christian Theology,' in which the Christian faith was set out clearly and logically and in which, through careful reasoning, the truth of Christianity could be established. Now at this point we may feel that Lull was attempting the impossible. One cannot prove Christianity to be true, neither can we convince men of the truth through force of argument. We would believe that it is only the Holy Spirit who can convince men of the truth.

However we must bear two things in mind: Firstly, Lull was a child of his time. He grew up in the scholasticism of the 'Middle Ages' where emphasis was placed on logical reasoning and argu-

ment. The Muslims had their own well developed systems of philosophy and Lull recognised the essential need to 'meet people where they are'. A second point springs to mind. In the book of Acts we find Paul and Apollos arguing from the Scriptures, proving that Jesus was the Christ, I wonder how many of us could easily do this. Perhaps our reluctance to engage in debate is due to our rather shaky understanding. Lull encouraged public debate. He would challenge Muslims to prove the case for Islam. How eager would we be to throw an open challenge to debate? How well do we know our Scriptures? Paul, in his letter to Timothy urges us to 'do our best to present ourselves to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who *correctly handles the word of truth*'.

3. The third requirement of Lull was that the missionary be a 'faithful, courageous witness for Christ' even at the risk of his life. In the 13th century many Muslim countries enforced the death penalty for those caught proclaiming the Christian gospel. While this is rarely the case today it is true that some of the fiercest opposition to the gospel comes from Islamic states and we have seen within the pages of this magazine those who have been imprisoned in Muslim countries for their beliefs. Lull said, 'missionaries will convert the world by preaching, but also by the shedding of blood and tears and with great difficulty as well as by means of bitter death'.

Lull's endeavours show remarkable determination. In a time when there were no cars, trains or planes, he travelled widely in Europe sharing his his vision with popes, prelates and princes.³ 'At one time or another we find him everywhere in the Christian world of that day at the universities of Paris and Montpellier; at the court of the kings of Aragon, of France, of Sicily,

even of Cyprus; in the presence of every pope who reigned between 1265 and 1320; in the republics of Genoa, Pisa and Venice, which had notable connections with the Muslim world; and finally at the general Council which met at Vienna in 1311'.⁴ Sadly his visits often coincided with events that prevented the leaders giving attention to his aims.

Lull however was not one to give up and his patience and determination are an example and challenge to us all. In 1274, at the age of 42, he set up an institute of oriental languages in his native Majorca. He had been working 10 years before this, his first goal, was achieved. His first missionary journey was not to take place for a further 17 years. In 1291 at the age of 59, when many of us would be thinking of retiring, he began to preach and debate in Muslim North Africa. His second missionary journey came in 1307 at the age of 75, but this was not the last the Muslims saw of this faithful servant. In 1313 at the ripe old age of 81 he began his third major missionary journey to the Africa he loved and to the people for whom he had such a burning zeal and compassion.

What is truly remarkable is that only on this last journey did Lull begin to see real fruit from his labours which he had carried on for half a century. Only now did he begin to see conversions both of ordinary folk and then princes and leaders. Three years later Lull died from the wounds received from a stoning in Bugia, still preaching in the towns of North Africa, of whom, to quote the writer to the Hebrews, 'the world was not worthy'.

In Romans 10 we read these words: 'How then can they call on the one they have not believed in, and how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard, and how can they hear without someone preaching to them'.

At the recent Carey ministers conference, John Armstrong reminded us of the commission we *all* have to preach the good news to all nations. Moreover the task is made easier today, not just by the invention of the car and the plane but by the fact that the world has come to us. In our universities and colleges there are students from many lands that have not heard the gospel. They come from countries hostile to missionaries but we find, many of these are open to the gospel. We do not have to learn their languages or culture to the same extent for they have done us the favour of learning ours. Furthermore in our inner cities there are Muslims and Sikhs; Hindus and Buddhists; Africans, Asians and Latins; many of whom have never heard the gospel of grace. But how will they hear if no one preaches to them?

It is through the efforts of men like Raymond Lull and many other similar faithful servants, lesser known heroes of the past, that we have the opportunities we enjoy in the West today. Let us learn from the methods, theory and most of all the relentless determination of these saints of past times and may their example serve as an incentive to us to follow in their steps and finish the great task set by the Master.

Footnotes

- ¹ David Bosch in *Unisa Study Guide in Missiology* p. 32.
- ² Stephen Neil, *A History of Christian Missions* p. 115.
- ³ K. S. Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity*, Vol. 2, p. 322ff
- ⁴ M. F. Goldsmith in I.V.P. *Dictionary of Theology*.

Bibliography

As above, also D. Bosch, *Witness to the World*.

What is a Reformed Baptist Church?

The above is the title of a book by Dr Poh Boon Sing of Malaysia. He wrote the 42 page book while in prison. The purpose was to describe the nature of the newly planted Reformed Baptist churches in Malaysia. But the work is entirely relevant for churches everywhere. Who are we? How do we fit into the contemporary ecclesiastical scene? As Baptists we gladly embrace the Reformation and Puritan heritage represented in the Westminster Confession of faith. At the same time we are Baptist. But what does it mean to be Baptist? Through Poh's clear mind has filtered brief explanations of the following salient issues:

1. *Origins of the RBs.*
2. *Growth and development of the RBs.*
3. *What it means to be Reformed.* Seven features including worship, the place of preaching and the covenant are discussed.
4. *What it means to be Baptist.* Six features are explained including the nature of church membership, voluntary discipleship, immersion, independency and inter-dependency, and the priesthood of all believers.
5. *The 1689 Confession.* The history is outlined and some of the most relevant sections discussed.
6. *The relationship of RBs to other evangelicals.* Attention is given in particular to the position of Reformed Paedobaptists and Charismatics.

A significant feature of the book is the

decisive rejection of every form of subjectivism (prophecy, tongues, miracles), by which claims of authority are made, claims which in spite of all the protests to the contrary, really usurp the supreme authority of Scripture. Yet there is a healthy emphasis in the book on the necessity of holy living and the importance of meaningful spiritual experience in the Christian life.

We should be encouraged to observe that this definitive, precise and accurate statement should come from a brother of Chinese origin living on the other side of the earth from Western Europe and America. What is even more heartening is the observation that this book is needed not only for the R.B. movement everywhere but has been published in an eastern nation not far from places like China and Indonesia where spiritual fertility is colossal, and where teaching materials are needed on a massive scale. Many young churches are seeking identity. By the end of this century it is conceivable that there will be hundreds of R.B. churches in the Far East, and in the early part of the next century 1,000s of churches which fit the description of Poh's book. The truth does not stand still, and nor does the Holy Spirit whose express purpose it is to glorify God's Son in a global way (Psalm 72).

Book distributors are urged to negotiate for supplies of this title from *Good News Enterprise* (see back inside cover). Very reasonable prices are offered. There are no currency snags. An efficient service has been given by G.N.E. so far.

The Perseverance of the Saints

There are five reasons why I believe that this truth is relevant today and in urgent need of reappraisal.

The first is that this truth is confused with eternal security. We often hear of 'eternal security' which means that 'we are not only saved, but we are also *safe*.' An example of this is found in the new book by Peter Jeffery, 'Christian Handbook.'¹ The book is excellent. I simply wish to draw attention to the fact that the scriptures speak about perseverance. The enjoyment of eternal security belongs only to those who persevere in their faith. There is no place whatever for presumption.

The second is that the reality of apostasy is not taken seriously today. Apostasy means renunciation of the faith.² It occurs occasionally. When it does it is with considerable surprise because nobody expected that to happen. So it was in the of Judas Iscariot. His apostasy came as a complete shock to the disciples of our Lord. We read too of Hymenaeus and Philetus who wandered away from the truth (2 Tim 2:18). Have you ever taken 1 Corinthians 9:24 10:17 (which is a parallel with the Hebrews letter) as relevant for today? Do some in these days fall away because of disaffection, adultery, or worldliness?

The third is that very few Christians build into their lives any form of physical discipline. The idea is almost unheard of, or regarded as a relic of monasticism. Yet in the context of perseverance Paul declared, 'I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified' (1 Cor 9:27). Some, like Leon Morris take that to mean to lose the prize but others, like Godet, Charles Hodge and Albert Barnes, take the word *adikomos* (rejected), to mean to lose salvation. I believe that view is correct because the word is consistently used in the N.T. to mean that which is rejected, or worthless, or a sham, that which has failed the test (Rom 1:28; 2 Cor 13:5; 2 Tim 3:8).³

The fourth is that Reformed writing generally is so intent on refuting Arminianism that the real doctrine of perseverance is missed, sometimes completely. The Arminian viewpoint is vividly presented by Lenski the Lutheran commentator in his comments on John 10:27-29, 'I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish.' Lenski says, 'we ourselves may turn wilfully from him and may perish wilfully of our own accord.'⁴ If my salvation depends on the frailty of my will then the prospect is terrifying, for as I will show under the heading 'The perils of perseverance,' who knows what trials may lie ahead? But since my salvation depends on the faithfulness of my Father, I can rejoice with an a full assurance of faith and with joy inexpressible and full of glory (Heb 10:22; 1 Pet 1:9). We need to refute wrong teaching but in so doing must not allow the truth of God's sovereignty to obliterate the Biblical stress on human responsibility.

The fifth is that many who profess to be Christians have no experience whatsoever of the biblical truth of perseverance. In the review of the book *The Gospel According to Jesus* by John F. MacArthur which appeared in R.T.107, we were reminded that large numbers have been deceived by easy believism. They have no notion of discipleship and no idea of the reality of persevering. Yet the subject of perseverance is implicit everywhere in scripture. Jesus made it plain that only those who endure to the end will be saved (Mt 10:22; 24:13).

With these reasons in mind we proceed as follows.

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| 1 THE TERMS OF PERSEVERANCE | <i>perseverance explained</i> |
| 2 THE PERILS OF PERSEVERANCE | <i>perseverance involves a struggle</i> |
| 3 THE MEANS OF PERSEVERANCE | <i>the provisions made for us</i> |
| 4 THE TRIUMPH OF PERSEVERANCE | <i>the certainty of our arrival</i> |

1 THE TERMS OF PERSEVERANCE *perseverance explained*

In defining perseverance we need firstly to see what is meant in overall terms, and secondly to see how perseverance is expressed consistently in the New Testament. Thirdly, by way of definition we need to relate perseverance to other aspects of our salvation: justification, regeneration and sanctification, preservation and eternal security, backsliding, and assurance.

Firstly we view what is involved in perseverance. The 1689 Confession of Faith, chapter 17, has three paragraphs which can be presented in synopsis form as follows.

Paragraph A. The saints are God's elect to whom he has given saving faith so that they cannot totally or finally fall away, but will persevere because he continues to beget in them faith, repentance, love, joy, hope, and all the graces of the Spirit that issue in immortality.

Paragraph B. It is not on account of their free will that the saints persevere but the immutability of God's decree of salvation, and unchanging union with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. (This paragraph is important as it corrects the error of Arminianism.)

Paragraph C. It is possible for the saints to fall into sin to their own hurt and that of others, yet they will be renewed in repentance and will persevere to the end.

Secondly we see how perseverance is expressed consistently in the New Testament. The key word for perseverance used consistently in the N.T. is *hupomone* meaning to be patient, to endure, to persevere. (*meno* I remain, *hupo* under), hence remaining steadfast under. *Hupomone* is sometimes translated by the word endurance.

It will help to observe some notable instances of its occurrence in the N.T. Our Lord's affirmation, 'Because of the increase of wickedness the love of many will grow cold, but he who stands firm (*hupomeinas* – endures) to the end will be saved (Mt 24:13). Perseverance is an integral part of the believer's spiritual

equipment and character. It is the basic attitude of the righteous.⁵ That this is so is seen from the parable of the sower, 'But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by perseverance produce a crop' (Lk 8:15, see also Rom 2:7).

Perseverance as an essential quality of the Christian life is affirmed by Paul in Romans 5:3, 'suffering produces perseverance and perseverance character,' as well as James when he reminds us, 'the testing of your faith develops perseverance' (Jam 1:3). Again James says 'we consider blessed those who have persevered,' and holds up Job as a model of one who persevered in an exemplary manner (Jam 5:12). Peter, in outlining a way of certainty against falling requires of us that we make every effort to add perseverance to self-control, and to perseverance godliness.

The letter to the Hebrews is the principal source of teaching on this theme of perseverance. From first to last its style is one of admonition to persevere and avoid apostasy. Psalm 95:7-11 is cited in Hebrews 3:7-11, and 4:3-11. The writer reminds the Hebrews that they did stand their ground (10:32, they persevered, *hupemeinate*). They are exhorted to persevere in the race (12:2), remembering that Christ endured appalling agony for us (12:3). They should know and appreciate that the endurance (*hupomenete*), of chastening as sons, is an essential part of the Christian life (Heb 12:7-11).

We see then that perseverance, endurance (*hupomone*), in the N.T. is an integral part of the Faith and an essential part of our Christian experience.

Thirdly, by way of definition, we need to relate perseverance to other aspects of our salvation: justification, regeneration and sanctification, preservation, eternal security, backsliding, and assurance.

Justification. Perseverance has a starting point and firm foundation in justification by faith. This is clearly portrayed in Romans 8:28 and following. From first to last salvation is of the Lord. The work he begins he completes (Phil 1:6). The context in Romans 8 takes us to a thrilling climax by way of practical conclusion. If God the Father justifies the sinner then who can condemn that sinner? Nothing on earth or heaven can separate the redeemed sinner from the love of God. Justification provides a solid base by which we can win through however desperate the battle. This is exceedingly practical because the constant ploy of the Devil is to tempt the saint to sin, and when he has sinned to tempt him to believe that he is condemned on that account and lost after all. No matter how many falls we may have, we must persevere. If the Father justifies me on the basis of Christ's merit then who can condemn me? (Rom 8:32).

Jonathan Edwards asserts that justification belongs only to those who have a persevering faith, and goes on to make the point that a vigorous exercise of faith strengthens our resolution to persevere.⁶

Regeneration and Sanctification Progressive sanctification commences with and springs out of regeneration. It is at that time that perseverance is born to

grow and develop. Perseverance is allied to progressive sanctification. Perseverance is the engine by which the process of sanctification is constantly propelled forward. Without perseverance the thorough work of transformation of our natures to conform us to the likeness of Christ falters.

Preservation and eternal security It is imperative to distinguish clearly between preservation and perseverance. We persevere: God preserves. We believe, we repent, we persevere. God does not believe for us, repent for us, persevere for us. He preserves his own. He keeps them from falling (Jude 24). The marathon runner runs. He is supported by a back up team all the way, but he does the running. A channel swimmer is supplied with his needs by a support ship all the way, but he, and he alone, does the swimming. This may seem basic but it most important because we too easily allow the emphasis on God's sovereignty to be stressed to the neglect of human responsibility. Stated simply, human responsibility means that if I rebel and live sinfully I will place myself in mortal danger. But if I am obedient and obey the precepts of Scripture I will enjoy assurance.

It follows that, if I am preserved by my Father in my conflicts, then I can enjoy the assurance of eternal security. In the context already referred to, namely 1 Corinthians 9:24 to 10:13, the concluding declaration is vital, 'God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear.' He will fulfil his purpose for me,' (Ps 138:8). That is for this world but what about the next? This temptation might arise: Adam the head of the human race fell; the angels fell. What is to prevent a rebel initiating a rebellion in the next world? That would be the end of eternal life. The saying of Jesus in John 10:28 has a double negative 'they will never ever perish' and the language used literally means: by no means whatever can they perish even to the ages to come (*eis ton aiona*). Union with Christ is forever and he is our eternal security.

Backsliding While the word 'backslide' does not occur in the N.T.⁷ the concept is implicit. For instance, while the Ephesian believers were orthodox in faith and hardworking they had in fact gone back, backslidden, with regard to their love for Christ. So serious is that defect that our Lord warns them that they are in danger of losing their candlestick. He would negate their role as the leading church in Asia Minor.

The letter to the Hebrews implies throughout that Jewish believers were going back, that is backsliding. This raises the question of their status. Were they true believers? Were they born again? In no way should we reduce the force of the solemn warnings in the two climactic passages in Hebrews, namely 6:4-6 and 10:26-31. It is usual to concentrate on the first passage to the neglect of the second but the two passages belong to each other. They teach that it is possible to go a long way into the Christian Faith and yet not be born again.⁸

There is is awful peril in backsliding. To go back immediately casts doubt on our profession of faith. We know well that those who have been truly born again will always be reclaimed as we see with Samson, David and Peter. We can cite

similar instances in our own times. Only the Lord knows those who are his and only he knows the true state of the human heart. But by no means do all those who profess faith and turn back then return. Some having gone back never recover. They appear to be beyond recovery. We are obliged to conclude of them as the apostle John did of some in his day: 'Their going showed that none of them belonged to us' (1 Jn 2:19). There is also the awesome truth of God's sovereignty declared in John 15:2, 'He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit.'

John intimates that there are three kinds of apostasy: doctrinal, moral and social. Going back from Christ into apostasy can manifest itself in heterodoxy (rejection of the deity of Christ), living in immorality, or hatred for the brothers. The signs of apostasy often show in carelessness about worship and lack of love in worship.⁹

Assurance Perseverance is closely allied to assurance which is outlined in the next chapter of the 1689 Confession. Chapter 18 paragraph 3 tells us that diligence in the use of the means of grace increases assurance. We could say that a strong assurance produces an empowerment for the believer to give him increased determination to persevere. And then as he perseveres so his assurance is increased. All the graces work to strengthen each other (2 Pet 1:5-9).

2 THE PERILS OF PERSEVERANCE *perseverance involves a struggle*

When the author of Hebrews reaches his powerful application in chapter 12 he exhorts his readers, 'Therefore since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race (Greek: *Agona*) set before us.' Marathon runners testify that in a strange way they enjoy the pain involved in their discipline of running the race. There are agonising parts especially in the closing stages of 26 miles. We must be careful not to interpret the whole of Christianity by a part. There is joy inexpressible in our experience just as there is pain, and sometimes both pain and joy are experienced simultaneously in an indescribable manner. 'Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds,' (Jam 1:2). Our heavenly Father has determined to perfect his children and he uses a variety of trials to achieve that end.

A contemplation of the trials through which some believers pass might fill us with alarm. What if we are cast into tribulation as was Job? Could we persevere in our faith as he did? What if we suffer some debilitating illness which has the effect of weakening us all round with a baneful effect on the strength of our wills? If perseverance depends merely on the strength or otherwise of our wills what will happen then? Or what prospect is there if in old age we become senile and lose our grip or hold that we normally always keep on our wills? Is not the prospect of perseverance bleak under such circumstances? What prospect of success in persevering is there for us?

And what of persecution? What if under pressure like Thomas Cranmer (1489-1556) we denied the faith as he did, six times? Would we recover as he did, so much so that when he was at the stake he held out the hand that had signed recantations in the flames and cried out, 'This hand hath offended, this unworthy hand!' Would we, like him, have the courage to confess Christ boldly?

There are heroes by nature who seem fearless when exposed to physical pain but there are others who are naturally timid and for whom any form of physical suffering is intolerable. What about the strength of their wills? Will they not deny the Lord if threatened with torture or death? If faced with the arena and the prospect of being torn to pieces by ravening lions will they persevere in the faith? Are they not much more likely to be overcome with terror and deny their faith? There are also men of great moral fibre and in contrast some who are absolute cowards like Pontius Pilate. What if you are a weak character like Pilate, and you are placed in a position where your Christian testimony requires that at great risk to yourself you stand for the poor and the afflicted, perhaps standing against civil authorities for those wrongfully imprisoned? Will you maintain a good conscience? Will you persevere?

A further area for thought is that of temperament. What of natures that are acutely sensitive and prone to depression and acute melancholia, people like the hymn writer William Cowper, who for some periods in his life suffered insanity and who eventually died in a desperately sad condition? What are we to say of people like that who crave to escape the agonies of this life and in their desperation commit suicide? Are we to conclude that they are lost because they did not have the strength of will to resist that temptation to self murder? Surely we do not hold the view that only those dying in a holy state of mind go to heaven? That indeed would be an addition to justification by faith alone. The terms of salvation would then be: I am saved on account of the righteousness of Christ imputed to me, the reality of which evidences itself in a holy life, but it is also required that when I die, I die without sin.

Believers can fear tragedy like Horatio Spafford who lost his four daughters through a ship going down at sea. In his grief he wrote the hymn which begins, 'When peace, like a river, attendeth my way, when sorrows like sea billows roll.' By no means do all believers respond like Job. Some in bereavement have abandoned their faith and become extremely bitter. And what of those who have been in the forefront of the Lord's work but who have fallen like King David into adultery, but unlike King David have not recovered, but rather apostatised?

The perils are many. How do we face them?

3 THE MEANS OF PERSEVERANCE *the provisions made for us*

The Confession of Faith as we have observed refers to the means of perseverance. God nourishes in his people faith, repentance, love, joy and hope.

They persevere by working out their salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in them to will and to act according to his good purpose, (Phil 2:12,13). The tension of God's sovereignty and our responsibility is held in balance. The practical means for perseverance are the provisions of preaching, fellowship and prayer. The high point therefore for application in the Hebrews letter is chapter 10:25, 'Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing.'

This leads us to consider the urgent and practical question of how the N.T. deals with this subject of apostasy? How are we to recall those who are slipping back? What is the correct pastoral approach toward those who no longer want to meet together and who spurn the means of grace? The Hebrews letter was written with such problems in mind.

It is worthwhile contrasting in very broad terms the two epistles, Romans and Hebrews. Romans tells us mostly how to be saved: Hebrews mostly how to stay saved. In Romans Christ is set before us as our Righteousness, and hence our Justification; in Hebrews Christ is set before us our high priest who interceding on our behalf is able to save us to the uttermost.

There are times in Church history, particularly following times of revival when some are tempted to go back. Then the message of the Hebrews letter is particularly relevant. Hence John Owen's burden concerning decline in the period following the great era of the Puritans (1558-1662) and his concentration on the Hebrews letter (six volumes!). Furthermore when the Church is under severe pressure and subject to discouragement and believers begin to falter this theme is vital. Then especially does the message of Hebrews spring to life.

The letter to the Hebrews is the principal place in the Bible, the locus classicus, dealing with the need to persevere. I would sum up its message concerning the means of perseverance as follows:

1 *We must when under pressure not dilute Christian doctrine* The Jews were under pressure from the unbelieving constituency who found it extremely hard to cope with the claim that one who suffered such humiliation was indeed the Messiah. It was embarrassing for them to insist that his new religion was in every way superior to that which had pertained for centuries, and that in fact the new way was so complete as to remove entirely the old priesthood with its rituals and sacrifices, rendering them superfluous. In spite of the unpopularity of the message of a superior prophet and priest and the mediator of a new covenant, the writer leaves out nothing. In our day we are under all kinds of pressures to compromise the message of the gospel. That we must not do. We must depend on the Holy Spirit to convince the world of sin, righteousness and judgment (Jn 16:8-11). We must maintain the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27).

2 *We must not compromise our warnings about apostasy* The warnings of Hebrews 6:4-6 and 10:26-31 are exceedingly solemn. It is misguided to reduce their moral force.¹⁰ Admonition is an important part of preaching. By

admonition we are kept. Note the stern character of Romans 11:22, 'Continue in his kindness. Otherwise you will be cut off!' The principle of admonition is illustrated by the shipwreck described in Acts 27. Only by staying on board the ship could they be saved. Paul's admonition was effective. Some sailors tried to sneak away using the lifeboat. They were stopped by the centurion. Christ is our lifeboat. We must remain in him (Jn 15:4). No one can be saved outside him (Jn 15:6).

3 *We must warn especially against hardness of heart* The author of Hebrews repeats his exhortation, 'Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts!' (3:7 and 4:7). When last did you really examine your affections? Do we take seriously the importance of the first and great commandment to love the Lord our God with all our hearts and our neighbours as ourselves? Do reformed believers give as much attention to the need of love as they do to the need of orthodox belief? It is not one or the other. Both are imperative. Most falling away is due to coldness of heart rather than problems of the intellect or of doctrinal perplexity.

4 *We must provide hearty encouragement by setting forth Christ as high priest* To think we can bully and bash those who err into submission is misguided. Our teaching must be uncompromising but presented affectionately supported with rich incentives and encouragements. The Puritan preacher Richard Sibbes was noted for his tender-hearted ministry and was famous for his preaching on Isaiah 42:3; the bruised reed and the smoking flax. Why is it that gentleness and tender heartedness is missing today? We lack preachers of breadth. Too many know how to thunder and too few how to persuade winsomely and quietly. What could be more encouraging for a poor weak doubting believer than the knowledge that Christ ever lives to save to the uttermost all who come to the Father by him?

5 *We must be especially explicit in practical instruction about the necessity to use the means of grace* The main exhortation and practical application of Hebrews begins at 10:22. Here we are told that prayer, meeting together and observing how we might spur each other on to toward love and good deeds are essential. If all efforts to restore the wanderer fail then church discipline must be applied, but this is not likely to be effective if the leaders have not shown love in practical ways towards those who have erred.

6 *We must provide stirring examples of those who have persevered* (biography and history are important) Hebrews 11 provides a stirring account of the persevering faith of the O.T. believers. Our hearts are moved by the example of others. Doctrine instructs and biography inspires because it illustrates doctrine in practise. Church history and biography occupy an important place in the teaching ministry of the local church. Those who are gifted in this area should be encouraged to edify the church with that gift. All revivals reported in the Bible had their genesis in looking back to the past. In Church history we see the same pattern. Stirring descriptions of past revivals stir us up to seek revival today, on the personal, local and national level.

7 *We must remind believers that chastisement is an essential part of Christian experience* When there is adversity and hardship weak believers can be overwhelmed by the temptation to think that their faith is meaningless and their efforts futile. As the writer to the Hebrews urges the absolute necessity of persevering in the Faith, so must we.

4 THE TRIUMPH OF PERSEVERANCE *the certainty of our arrival*

Observe the note of defiance in the words of Jesus in response to those who were hating him and taking up stones to stone him:

*I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish!
No one can snatch them out of my hand!
No one can snatch them out of my Father's hand!
My Father has given them to me!
My Father is greater than all! (Jn 10:28)*

Our Lord implies that every evil power will be set against these sheep to cause them to perish, but they shall never perish. The powers at work to destroy these sheep are immense. The great dragon would snatch them away to destruction. But the Father is greater than he. He will not allow the sheep to perish. Even though they destroy the shepherd they still cannot destroy his sheep. The Father's purpose is to give these sheep to the Good Shepherd. Nothing can frustrate the Father's purpose. Jesus defies his enemies with these truths.

Jesus' teaching confirms that there will be terrible perils. Believers will have to endure tribulations of all kinds. They will be thrown into prison. As in Russia they might be treated as madmen who need to be subdued with drugs. Forces of the most diabolical kind will be unleashed against them. But though all the powers of hell conspire against them they shall never perish.

What of all the other perils? Persecution is one form of opposition but many are the devices of Satan. He plagues believers with doubts and assails them with illnesses, disappointments, afflictions and trials. But they shall never perish! They will persevere when young in the faith. When they are old and weak they will persevere still. They will never perish!

The same fierce defiance characterises Paul's climactic conclusion in his letter to the Romans. He describes the Father's purpose for believers, a purpose which will not be frustrated. Waxing eloquent Paul portrays all opposition and all possibilities conceivable. He defies them all. He is convinced that nothing will be able to separate us from the love of God which is Christ Jesus (Rom 8:28-39). In this way he endorses the teaching of Jesus, 'My Father is greater than all, no one will be able to snatch them from my Father's hand!'

The conclusion to which we come is that the gift of salvation includes the gift of persevering faith and the ability to endure trials of all kinds. Perseverance is part and parcel of the Christian life. It must be taught as part of our discipleship. Jesus warned all those who wished to follow him as learners that endurance was essential. 'If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me' (Mt 16:24). The cross stood for a painful death and must mean death to self. Yet in that death to self there is the enjoyment of possessing the pearl of inestimable price, the gift of eternal life.

The ability to persevere is part and parcel of that gift of eternal life. Whatever is before us we do well to grasp this teaching. Yet it would be misguided to think that the Christian life is all grind and grit. Jesus said that his yoke is easy and his burden is light.

The N.T. teaching of perseverance is that it is the Lord who has begun a good work in us and that he will complete that good work (Phil 1:9). It is his good work yet at the same time it is our work. Everywhere the emphasis is on striving, running, adding, working, and using to the full all the means provided for us that we might persevere to the end. Indeed, we are promised that if we make every effort and do what we are told, we will never fall but will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and saviour Jesus Christ (2 Pet 1:5-11).

Footnotes

¹ Evangelical Press of Wales, 192 pp., £7.95, 1988, see page 176.

² The opposite of perseverance is apostasy the transliteration of a Greek word *apostasia* which means 'a revolt,' 'a standing away from,' or 'a falling away.' *Aphistemi* to revolt, to depart, to fall away, is used in various forms in the N.T. The apostles warned against a coming apostasy, 2 Thess 2:3; 1 Tim 4:1-3; 2 Pet 3:17.

³ *Dict of N.T. Theol.*, editor Colin Brown, vol. 3, p. 808ff.

⁴ Lenski, *Commentary on John*, p. 756.

⁵ 'Hupomone as the basic attitude of the righteous, as developed in the O.T. and later Judaism, finds a natural continuation in the eschatologically oriented thinking of the N.T. The endurance which is given with hope of the realisation of the kingdom of God is a basic attitude of the Christian too as he faces attacks of a hostile and unbelieving world as he finds himself in the midst of its temptations. It is a decisive precondition to attain personally to the final salvation of God.' *Kittel*, vol. 4, p. 581.

⁶ *Works*, vol. 2, p. 596.

⁷ The word backslide never appears in the N.T. There are four different words in Hebrew for backslide but not an easy equivalent in Greek.

⁸ See exposition of Hebrews 6:1-9 by Gary Phillips, R.T.98

⁹ See discussion of John Owen's work on apostasy in worship, R.T.106, p.29

¹⁰ *ibid* Gary Phillips, R.T.98

Recommended reading. G. C. Berkouwer, *Faith and Perseverance*, Eerdmans.

Carey Conference Cassettes

Available from: Crag House Farm, Smithy Lane, Cookridge, LEEDS LS16 7NH. £1.50 each, add p&p, 1-3 cassettes 26p each, 4 and over 13p each.

News

France

September 1987 saw the publication of the first books of EUROPRESSE, Evangelical Press' French subsidiary. The event was a significant step in a missionary vision to supply French books carrying the message of God's free and sovereign grace. Since then 17 titles have been published with many more under preparation.

Through these books EUROPRESSE aims to proclaim the message of the Reformation so that ordinary French-speaking Christians can live out its implications in their daily lives, a bold goal in a soft culture where comic books are king and the screen rules. Looking at the contemporary scene one realises why much has been lost since the days of Calvin or Cesar Malan, to name but two outstanding sons of the French heritage.

The French-speaking scene is dominated by theological compromise and evangelical niceness and is a hotbed of Charismaticism and dispensationalism. The confusion is indescribable and the war against truth almost universal. Yet God has his people who are faithful to him.

The field is immense including (besides France, Switzerland and Belgium), part of Canada, some islands of the West Indies and much of Africa. A mind-stretching challenge! Such an effort surely needs prayer and the Lord raises people to pray; will you be one of them?

Jean Claude Soulliot, together with a small team of translators manages EUROPRESSE which operates from Chalón-sur-Saone in central France. Ken Wimer, missionary on the Ivory Coast takes care of the African front.



Jean Claude Soulliot and his family

After eighteen months on the market the response is encouraging. The books have still to be marketed in countries like Canada. The titles published so far in paperback form are:

The Sovereignty of God by A. W. Pink, *Ultimate Questions and Learning & Living* by John Blanchard, *The Lord's Supper* by E. Kevan, *C. H. Spurgeon* by A. Dallimore, *Discovering God's Will* by Sinclair Ferguson, *Losing touch with the living God* by John Benton, *Son of Mary, Son of God* and *A Life worth living* by Stuart Olyott, *Preach the Word* and *A man & his God* by Denis Lane and *The Bible Class Commentary series* by Henry Mahan.

The general vagueness of many Evangelical leaders in the French speaking world is leaving a terrible vacuum. The liberal, ecumenical and fashionable wing of the religious scene is catered for but few are those who truly love the Word to the point of being clear about its message. There is need for publishers who will adhere unreservedly to the doctrines of grace and baptist convictions. EUROPRESSE may become an energetic force for the truth.

EUROPRESSE also produces a radio programme, *Echos de la Verite* (Echoes of Truth) via FEBA in the Seychelles and two local stations in France. These fifteen minute Bible studies proclaim uncompromisingly God's sovereign grace, attracting some 500 letters a month, mainly from Africa. Bill Clark is the leading preacher producing these programmes and the driving force behind the work as a whole.

1689 Tercentenary Meetings

It is not the policy of R.T. to advertise meetings but occasionally we report forthcoming matters of unusual interest.

Tom Nettles, Henry Wood, Larry Dean and Randy Booth are due to speak at the Reformed Baptist Family Conference at New Testament Baptist Church, 2801 Creswell, Shreveport, Louisiana, U.S.A., 29th April. Randy Booth's subject is particularly noteworthy: 'The Confession as a Statement of Unity'.

Details have been confirmed concerning the two day conference at Westminster Central Hall, London, 8th and 9th September. Speakers: Barrie White, Robert Oliver, Tom Nettles, Joel Gregory and Raymond Brown. Remember to book this time in your diary.

There is a day Carey Conference in Belfast, N. Ireland arranged for 11th September. Speakers: Tom Nettles and Erroll Hulse.



Jack Hood (left) and Peter Day at the Carey Conference

The Carey Conference – 1989

A Report by Dean Olive

The Carey Conference for 1989 met in the lovely Yorkshire town of Ripon, from January 3rd to the 5th. The meetings took place on the campus of the College of Ripon and York St John. The accommodations and meals were first class. While the numbers attending the conference were not as much as the last few years (probably due to distance and the increase in price), there was a tremendous spirit of fellowship and the quality of ministry was exceptional.

Four of the speakers dealt with subjects that have not only a basis in Scripture but which also are stated in the Second London Confession, better known among present day Baptists as the *1689 Confession of Faith*. It has been 300 years since the General Assembly of Particular Baptist adopted this distinguished document. The Carey Conference got Baptists off to a good start for the many tercentenary celebrations which will be held this year.

It was fitting, therefore to begin with a paper on 'The History and Influence of the Confession'. This was presented by Robert Oliver. An excellent foundation was laid here for the topics that would follow. Mr Oliver discussed the antecedents of the 1689 Confession: the Westminster Confession and the Savoy Declaration. The reasons, both doctrinal and practical, for Baptists needing a Second Confession to replace the First London Confession (1644), were spelled out. One of the most interesting parts of the paper dealt with the latter history of the Confession. The Confession was almost forgotten during the 18th Century. One reason was the influence of John Gill with his stringent

adherence to the tenets of hyper-Calvinism. But the teachings of the Confession was to flourish again. It was published again in 1790, 1809, 1851, and then in 1855 by C. H. Spurgeon. The 20th Century has seen a revival of the 1689 Confession and is now 'more widely used throughout the world than at anytime in its history'.

Three papers in particular corresponded directly to the Confession: Adoption, the Law, and Perseverance. The first is neglected in our day, the second is highly controversial, and the third greatly misunderstood. Each speaker pointed out that the Confession did not say all that could be said about the subject, but what it did say was accurate and ought to be declared in our day.

In his message on Adoption (ch. 12 of the Confession) Austin Walker took the major passages on Sonship in the N.T. and gave them a thorough explanation. Much emphasis was placed on the experimental aspects of adoption. Pastor Walker stressed the need for this doctrine to capture our hearts as well as our minds. This was appreciated as we must never be content with doctrinal precision.

The presentation on 'The Law of God' (ch. 19 of the Confession) was given by Bob Sheehan. This highly volatile subject was handled in a gracious and balanced manner. Bob Sheehan has a tremendous gift in making things clear. On the subject of the Law, the First and Second London Confessions differ. He declared that both statements were good, but both were incomplete. Too often, men have argued exclusively for

either the 1644 or the 1689 statement, when the truth is found in both. Tragically, the tension between these two positions has produced a serious attitude problem among exponents. Authoritative, domineering men, with an 'aurora of personal infallibility', have clouded the issue.

Pastor Sheehan discussed four strands of teaching in the New Testament regarding the Law. All four strands, he argued, are essential. The first three lines of argument would be agreed upon by all Calvinistic Baptists. 1. The New Testament teaches us that law is a definable era of history, 2. The Old Testament is fundamentally an age of promise, picture, and type, 3. Every man and woman, both Jew and Gentile, has a law relationship to God, 4. But something has happened — *Christ has come!* So the Jewish era is over, we now live in the day of substance and fulfilment. We have been redeemed from the curse of the law! But does this mean that Christians are lawless? No! Believers are to live in accordance to the law of Christ in the N.T. and by the moral law of the O.T., wherever it might be found (not exclusively in the 10 commandments). We must, therefore, put due emphasis on the great moral commands in the O.T. and on the great commands of Christ in the N.T. We have been redeemed, not to be lawless, but to love God and keep his commandments. New Testament Scriptures were explained which clearly show that moral law from the Old Testament is applicable to saints under the New Covenant. Everyone will not be satisfied with his conclusions, but a healthy, Biblical balance was struck.

The subject of Perseverance (ch. 17 of the Confession) was energetically addressed by Erroll Hulse. This subject has been deplorably misunderstood. The Scriptures teach *both* the Preserva-

tion of the Saints and the Perseverance of the Saints! The material appears in this issue of *R.T.*

David Kingdon spoke on 'The Relationship of our Children to the Church'. Baptists ought to be grateful to Mr Kingdon's valuable contributions on the subjects of believer's children, baptism, and the covenants. New ground was ploughed as he spoke about John's baptism. John's baptism 'inserts a decisive discontinuity between the testaments'. The O.T. principle, 'thee and thy seed', was abrogated. John 'denied by his practice that family solidarity constitutes a ground for baptising infants'. The paper concluded with many helpful words concerning the position of believers' children.

The biographical paper this year, which has been one of the highlights of the Conferences I have attended, was again given by Geoff Thomas, on 'The Life of Francis Schaeffer'. Sales of books by and about Schaeffer would surely increase if this presentation of this leader's life were more widely known! The life of Schaeffer reveals that he was truly exceptional. Mr Thomas gave a transparent view of the man, disclosing both the negative and the positive. Schaeffer is not a model for us in everything, but there is much worth imitating. Schaeffer is an example to us in his letter writing, his prayer life, his family life, his outstanding hospitality, in his commitment to truth, in his diligent labour, and as one who died well. He was a 'Captain Great-Heart' and our lives were enriched by learning more about his service to the Lord Jesus Christ. A vital part of the presentation exposed the terrible hardline spirit which contributed toward grievous divisions in the Presbyterian churches. Schaeffer, through a profound spiritual experience in the 1950s, came to a different mind. To the end he contended uncompromisingly for the truth

but always with great compassion and love.

John Armstrong was the guest speaker from America this year. He comes from the Chicago area. He has been instrumental in bringing his church into the Reformed Faith. Dr Armstrong brought three messages at the Conference, all very different from one another. He gave a Bible exposition from John 6, a theological paper on Inerrancy, and a biographical paper on Andrew Fuller which challenged pastors regarding missionary vision. It was evident that Mr Armstrong is a pastor since all his preaching came with pastoral application, in contrast to so much reformed preaching which is simply no more than a declaration of truth. The genius of the preaching lies in skilful application.

John 6:60-71 was carefully and masterfully opened up. Such things as the nature of faith – its exclusivity, fixity, and its finality – were brought to the forefront. Also, the tenderness of the Saviour as he cared for the disciples who remained by his side, was expounded. The message was most moving. I think all who heard it can still hear our Lord saying, ‘You do not want to leave too, do you?’ (v. 67).

John Armstrong’s paper on ‘The Doctrine of Inerrancy’ was controversial in places. The speaker heartily affirmed and ably defended inerrancy. But in his concern that we should understand the different positions he did take great pains to say that inerrantists ought not to paint Karl Barth with the same brush as classic liberals. While we all know that neo-orthodoxy is not as rank as old-line liberalism, it still must be placed squarely in the modernist camp. This aside, the presentation of the doctrine of inerrancy was excellent. The paper was organised under five points: 1. The

Background of Inerrancy, 2. A Definition of Inerrancy, 3. Why We Ought to Believe in Inerrancy, 4. Objections to Inerrancy, and then 5. Some Pastoral Appeals Concerning Inerrancy. It was rightly pointed out that we are in danger of thinking that the last word on theology has been written about this subject, or for that matter, any other. He challenged us to always be involved in ‘doing theology’. There still is a great need for us to grapple with both the human and divine element in Scripture. Barth’s problem, as with many non-evangelicals, is that because the human element is involved in the writing of Scripture, errors are assumed to be present. But the humanity of Christ does not negate his sinlessness and neither does the human element in the writing of Holy Scripture cancel inerrancy.

Finally John Armstrong spoke on ‘The Necessity of a Missionary Vision’. He made a close examination of the life of the man behind the scenes in William Carey’s going to India. Andrew Fuller was the prime mover in sending men to the mission field and in supporting the cause of missions at the turn of the 18th Century. He is truly ‘one of the great worthies in missions’. The application was that we today are still under the mandate to preach the gospel to every creature. We have more resources in ‘doing missions’ than any previous generation. While missions are the responsibility of the whole church, it was made abundantly plain that the unevangelised peoples of the world must become the deliberate focus of every pastor and leader in the church. This challenge was appropriately on the concluding day of the Conference.

God willing, the Carey Conference will be held again next year at the same location, from January 2nd-4th. Mark the time in your diary now.

Commitment to a Land of Hope

Martin Holdt

We have just returned from the Fourth International Baptist Conference in Toronto. Men from all over the world who love the doctrines of grace met for an edifying five days of instruction and fellowship. If there was only one thing which made the Conference so beneficial, then it was the encouragement received from so many men who are glad that there is a witness for truth in South Africa. One of the major reasons why I was invited to attend was precisely because as a South African I could go on behalf of those of us who are committed to a land which is in the world's spotlight. Brothers in Christ want to pray for us and want us to know that we are not alone.

If we suffer a little because of world hostility and isolation, Vijay Chandry of the Fiji Islands (also at the Conference) has it ten times harder. He and his church are suffering at the hands of an oppressive regime and many of his fellow Indians on the island have left the land. Vijay has decided not to forsake God's flock, and encouraged by his North American colleagues is deter-

mined to put up with hardship for the gospel's sake.

There is a lesson for us here. What but the power of truth can change South African society? Who but the people of God, built up in their faith under preaching that stirs the heart, can hope for a better land?

Revival has visited South Africa before. It did so in the last century. It had a profound impact upon the whole country. It was spoken of in the world. Should God give us another outpouring of his Spirit, and there is no reason why he cannot, I for one want to be here — and I want my family and friends to be here too!

Spurgeon once said that the tide goes out before it comes in. May God in his mercy turn that tide for us and the whole land be set alight with the truth of sovereign and free grace!

Reprinted from 'Reformation South Africa'. Editor Martin Holdt, PO Box 1404, Honeydew 2040, South Africa. Dec. 1988.



Pastor Martin Holdt and his wife Beryl making a point to Pastor and Mrs Ed Wynn of Thunder Bay, Ontario at the conference

‘The Love of Money’

by Paul C. Clarke

The faults and weaknesses (as well as some of the strengths) of various members of that faithful group of disciples who accompanied with the Lord Jesus ‘beginning from the baptism of John’ are frequently brought to light in the Gospel narratives, but two of those men seem to stand out as the worst offenders. These two are Judas Iscariot, who basely betrayed his Master, and Simon Peter, who almost as basely (so it would seem) denied him. It is not without significance that when the names of the twelve apostles are listed, that of Simon Peter always appears first and that of Judas Iscariot, last. Peter is often correctly referred to as *primus inter pares* ‘first among equals’ in the apostolic body, yet there is some evidence that Judas also held for a while a position of eminence among them.

Judas ordained an apostle

Judas was evidently the only Judean among the twelve; all the others were Galileans. His name indicates that he was a native of Kerieth, a town, in the extreme south of Judea. He was probably one of those who went out to hear John the Baptist when he came ‘preaching in the wilderness of Judea’ and ‘Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region round about the Jordan’ went out to him (Mt 3:1,5). An enthusiastic young man, though too practical-minded to be visionary, Judas was strongly attracted to the rugged prophet and his ‘no-nonsense’ preaching. No doubt other Judeans besides Judas remained with John as his disciples and followed him as he slowly made his way up the Jordan valley, but we have knowledge only of Judas.

Eventually John was found ‘in Aenon, near to Salim, because there was much water there’ (Jn 3:23). The exact location of this Aenon is now unknown, but almost certainly it was at a fair distance north of the wilderness of Judea, where John first preached. I speak with caution (for that is certainly needed in forming a chronology of the events reported in the Gospels), but I am of the opinion that it was at Aenon that John identified Jesus as ‘the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world’ (Jn 1:29). Some of John’s disciples who soon afterward forsook their teacher and followed Jesus are identified in John 1:35ff, but there may have been others, Judas Iscariot among them.

We know that some of his disciples (e.g. Simon Peter, the sons of Zebedee, and Matthew the publican) were personally called by the Lord Jesus awhile before he ordained them as his apostles, but it is doubtful that this was true of every single one of them. There did come a time, however, when Jesus ‘ordained twelve, that they might be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach. . . .’ (Mk 3:14), and among those so ordained was Judas Iscariot. Before Jesus did that, however, ‘he went out into the mountain to pray, and he continued all night in prayer to God’ (Lk 6:12). We cannot even imagine the

intensity of his prayer as he went over the names of every single one of the twelve, and no doubt the names of various others of his faithful followers. He knew all their strengths and all their weaknesses. He knew the openheartedness of Andrew, the intense loyalty of James and John that would lead them at times to rashness, the pessimism of Thomas, and the impetuosity of Peter; and he recognised the tremendous labours that lay ahead for himself as during the next few months he would have to mould the characters of those rough men and train them for the great work of carrying his gospel to all the nations – work for a lifetime concentrated in a few short months! How earnestly our blessed Lord must have interceded for those men he loved so intensely, lingering long over every single name!

Yet I believe he lingered longest over the name of Judas Iscariot – ‘for Jesus knew from the beginning . . . who it was that should betray him’ (Jn 6:64). Jesus knew the ‘good qualities’ (as men would consider them) that Judas possessed, his winsomeness, his ability to draw others to his own point of view, and his business acumen. But he also knew the fatal flaw in that man’s character, *his love of money*, a trait that in the end would cause him to betray his beloved Master into the hands of his enemies and plunge his own soul into eternal perdition. Should this blackhearted hypocrite be included with the eleven faithful followers? Must Jesus ordain *him* as one of his apostles, a member of the select inner circle among the larger number of his disciples? Why not Joseph Barsabbas, or why not Matthias, rather than Judas Iscariot?

Nevertheless, it was his father’s will that he should ordain Judas, and this he did without murmur and without hesitation. He took the serpent into his bosom, and treated him with the same tender concern that he had for all the others. All of them needed frequent instruction concerning humility and warnings against covetousness, and it must have saddened the heart of Jesus to see that, while the others were surely, though indeed very slowly, learning these lessons, they had absolutely no effect on the heart of Judas.

Judas appointed treasurer

There is no evidence that the eleven Galileans resented in any way ‘the Southerner’ in their midst. On the contrary, they seemed to recognise that he was the most capable of them all when it came to handling money, and by common consent he was made treasurer of the group. While it is not so stated in the Gospel narratives, I believe that is what happened. I cannot believe that Jesus himself appointed Judas to that office, for it would have been very unlike our gracious Lord, knowing the peculiar weakness of Judas, to deliberately lay temptation in his way. Would he who taught his disciples to pray, ‘Lead us not into temptation’, deliberately lay temptation in the path of one of them? I am sure that the gentle Jesus would do no such thing. But neither would he, on the other hand, put suspicion into the minds of the eleven by objecting to their selection of Judas as the man best suited to manage the gifts of money that occasionally came to their group.

There were several women in Galilee who out of love and gratitude to Jesus ministered to his material needs and to those of his twelve apostles as they journeyed from place to place. These men travelled on foot over rough and dusty roads, and their clothes needed frequent laundering, mending, and even replacement. It may be that one of those women was unusually skilful at weaving, and she devoted her talent to making for her Master 'the coat [which] was without seam, woven from the top throughout' (Jn 19:23). We can only imagine the joy that must have been hers as she was thus able to meet in this unusual way a material need of her beloved Lord.

The lists of the names of these women (Mt 27:55-56; Lk 8:2-3) indicate that they were not of the peasant class but rather women who even had independent means, a thing not very common in those days. Luke says that they 'ministered unto them of their substance', and that could include occasional gifts of money in addition to food, clothing, and other necessities. In fact, it is not too much to suppose that gifts of money were made now and then by other grateful souls to the benevolent Prophet of Nazareth and his band of followers. When such gifts were received, they were given into the custody of Judas, and so he became the 'purchasing agent' for the entire group. As such he would be in a position to add a small 'service charge' to the price of any item he purchased for the group and keep that for himself.

Judas and the poor

Jesus taught his disciples, no doubt on more than one occasion, that 'freely ye received, freely give' (Mt 10:8) and that 'it is more blessed to give than to receive' (Acts 20:35). They were all poor, but almost every day they encountered people who were even poorer than themselves, and they had the happy privilege of ministering to the material needs of the destitute – not only by healing their sick, but also by giving them money for food and clothing. We can therefore imagine Judas being sent on various occasions to relieve an impoverished family with a gift of money from the Lord Jesus and his twelve disciples (see Jn 13:29). Such occasions gave Judas the opportunity to be the bringer of joy to a needy household and at the same time to add something to his own private store of money by pilfering a little from the benevolent gift. What if he did, for example, withhold ten percent for himself as a sort of 'handling fee'? The family would still get a generous gift, and he could truthfully bring back to Jesus and the eleven a report of the joy and gratitude of those who received it.

Going on these errands of benevolence even put Judas in a better position than his fellow disciples to know of cases of particular need. It was not surprising to them, therefore, that Judas should say, when Mary of Bethany took 'a pound of ointment of pure nard, very precious, and anointed the feet of Jesus . . .', 'Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?' (Jn 12:3-5). The other disciples quickly came around to this point of view. 'Certainly,' they could have reasoned, 'there is no other man among us who is so near to the poor and so aware of their needs as Judas'. And so it is likewise not

surprising that the rest of the disciples joined him in expressing indignation, saying, 'To what purpose is this waste? For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor' (Mt 26:8-9). Judas had them all hoodwinked. They not only took him for an honest man, but for a benevolent man as well.

Judas and the potter's field

'They that are minded to be rich fall into a temptation and a snare and many foolish and hurtful lusts, such as drown men in destruction and perdition' (1 Tim 6:9). Did the apostle Paul have Judas Iscariot in mind when he penned these words?

As Judas' secret store of money increased, covetousness in the heart of Judas likewise increased; and when he had accumulated what at one time he thought would satisfy him, his heart cried out for more, *more*, MORE! Reaching Jerusalem along with the others a few days before the beginning of Passover week, Judas felt increasingly disturbed and frustrated by the turn he saw his Master's fortunes were taking. Power and glory were within the grasp of Jesus, yet Judas saw him deliberately turn his back on them and choose a path which would most certainly lead to disaster. While the hope of Jesus' establishing an earthly kingdom was evidently crumbling, Judas' hope of acquiring wealth and influence within that kingdom was also crumbling. He determined, therefore, to salvage what he could out of his association with the Nazarene.

There was a piece of property near Jerusalem that this man learned could be had at a very low price. It had once been used as a place where pottery was made, but the supply of clay had run out, and the field had long lay unused. Judas foresaw the possibility of 'developing' that property and realising a handsome profit for himself if he could only raise enough money to buy it. Discovering that it could be had for just thirty silver shekels, he came to a decision. Going to the chief priests, he said, 'What are ye willing to give me, and I will deliver [Jesus] unto you?' (Mt 26:15a). This proposition delighted those evil men. For some time they had been consulting with one another as to how 'they might take Jesus by subtlety and kill him' (verse 4), and here was one of the man's own disciples offering to co-operate with them! Now they could have their own secret agent right in the inner circle of the Nazarene! It did not take them long to learn what Judas' price was, 'and [so] they weighed unto him thirty pieces of silver' (Mt 26:15b).

Judas secured the field, but not in the way he planned. He probably counted on Jesus' ability to elude his enemies and slip through their fingers as he had seen him do more than once in days past. Jesus would escape, and Judas would have the money. But when he saw that Jesus was arrested and condemned, remorse overwhelmed this low-minded schemer. Rushing into the inner sanctum of the temple, he dashed the thirty shekels at the feet of the priests and then ran out to have one last look at the field he had intended to buy with them. Climbing a brittle old tree that was standing there, he crept out on a limb, tied one end of a rope to it and the other end around his own neck. Then he leaped into the air.

His neck cracked, and his limp body swung back and forth for a few moments. At length the limb of the dead tree snapped, and the body of the wretched traitor plunged headlong and was broken in pieces on the rocks below.

Meanwhile the priests in the temple were discussing what they could do with the money Judas threw at them. When they received word of his suicide, they had the solution to their problem. 'The field is really his anyway,' they reasoned, 'and his body needs to be buried. So let's use his money to pay for the field and bury him there. Furthermore, for some time we have felt the need for a place to bury the bodies of people who visit Jerusalem and die before their intended departure. The purchase of this field will solve that problem as well.' And thus those men 'took counsel, and bought with [the silver pieces] the potter's field, to bury strangers in. Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day' (Mt 27:3-8).

The details about Judas as narrated in the gospels provide a telling warning and spell out for us all the importance of guarding our hearts against the love of money. Apart from the case of Ananias and Sapphira, was there ever a more fearful example of danger of the love of money than that of Judas Iscariot?

In the case of Ananias and Sapphira recorded in Acts 5:1-11, it was not only covetousness that blinded that couple, but pride and the love of praise and esteem. Observing the generosity of Joseph who the apostles called Barnabas (meaning Son of Encouragement) and the gratitude which Joseph's gift evoked, Ananias and Sapphira schemed to buy the esteem of the Church while at the same time providing richly for themselves. They supposed that when they brought their large gift to the apostles it would be received with smiles and expressions of gratitude, but instead of their names going down in history for generosity (like Barnabas), they became monuments of avarice and deceit. Who among us ever outgives the Lord? Whatever we give and whenever we give may it be with the utmost humility before the Lord and always scorning the approval or admiration of others!

'The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil' (1 Tim 6:10). Watchfulness, a careful examination of our affections and motives, combined with prayerfulness should protect us from falling into the trap of covetousness, and the love of money.

Simon Peter and money

There were flaws in Peter's character also, and they were even more in evidence than those of Judas, but love of money was not one of them. Early in his association with Jesus he naively assured the temple tax collectors that, yes, his Master would pay that voluntary assessment, thus compromising himself also, though neither he nor Jesus had wherewith to pay. Jesus 'got him off the hook' by sending him on a fishing expedition, from which he returned with money to pay for them both (Mt 17:24-27).



From left to right: Noel Espinosa, Antonio Hermano (Philippines), Lau Sing (Malaysia), Bill Clark and Romy Valdez (Philippines) at Carey Conference

Peter could truthfully say to the beggar at the door of the temple, 'Silver and gold have I none', but he had something far better for that poor fellow (Acts 3:1-10). Not long afterwards large sums of money passed through his hands when the more affluent disciples in Jerusalem sold their houses and lands and laid the proceeds at the apostles' feet for distribution among the needy (Acts 4:32-35). What would Judas have done if he were still among them?

Ananias and Sapphira coveted for themselves the reputation for generosity that Barnabas had earned and plotted to buy it with money whilst reserving a tidy balance for themselves. The Holy Spirit enabled Peter to see through their scheme, and with a clear conscience he could rebuke their avarice and deceit. The punishment they suffered was nearly as fearful as that of Judas (Acts 4:36-5:11).

Simon Magus had what perhaps was a worthwhile end in view when he attempted to buy an apostolic gift with money. What he did, however, aroused Peter's ire, and he exclaimed, 'Thy silver perish with thee!' (Acts 8:14ff.). Peter knew that silver and gold are perishable commodities, and he never changed his opinion of them. As for silver and gold he knew they would perish, and he disdained them as 'corruptible things' (1 Pe 1:4,7,18). Along with all of God's people he already had something infinitely better, an inheritance which he, Peter, describes with beautiful eloquence in the introduction of his first epistle, 'an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade — kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time! 'an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled . . . reserved in heaven'.

The Reformation of our Churches

A Review Article by Dean Olive

Part I

Shepherding God's Flock: essays on leadership in the local church. Edited by Roger O. Beardmore, 247 pages, paperback, Sprinkle Publications, \$8.00. Obtainable in U.K. from E.P. at £4.95. 12 Wooler Street, Darlington, Co. Durham DL1 1RQ.

With the resurgence of Reformed doctrine that has taken place in recent years, there has also been a return to a Biblical church government in Baptist churches. Many churches now have elders to give spiritual oversight and direction to the gathered people. But with the restoration of a Biblical Church government, problems have surfaced that have in many cases, crippled and damaged churches. The New Testament clearly presents the rule of elders in church life, but little is said about how that rule is to take effect. *Shepherding God's Flock* has been written with the express purpose of helping churches and elders to 'clarify issues, examine current practices, formulate guidelines, and provide direction in a number of areas of practical church life which have as their common denominator the question of local church leadership'. This is a 'how to' book. It does not attempt to prove that rule by elders is warranted Biblically, that is assumed. It does, however, seek 'to probe the more practical aspects of the doctrines of church government already established and commonly held'.

The book is published by Sprinkle Publications of Harrisonburg, Virginia, U.S.A. For some years this publishing organisation has been at work printing Baptist, Puritan, and Reformed litera-

ture. Most of their work has been in reprinting very useful classics. They have issued Dagg's valuable *Manual of Theology*, D'Aubigne's *Cromwell, The Protector, The Complete Works of Augustus M. Toplady*, and most recently, *The Complete Works of Andrew Fuller*, just to name a few. *Shepherding God's Flock* is essentially contemporary written by men who are presently serving as elders and who have a wide range of experience.

The ministers involved in writing these very practical essays on leadership in the local church, are ten in number: Walter Chantry, Erroll Hulse, Stuart Latimer, Paul Clarke, Roger Beardmore, Geoffrey Thomas, Ernest Reisinger, Leon Blosser, John Thornbury, and Tom Nettles. Several of these men have already contributed other helpful books and are respected by lovers of the doctrines of grace everywhere. No one will necessarily agree with all their conclusions, but pastors and elders will be better shepherds if this material is digested. It is a *must* book for leaders in all churches, especially those with a Baptist view of ecclesiology, who function or desire to function with a plurality of elders.

Shepherding God's Flock is arranged in four sections: 1. Leadership and the New Testament Church, 2. Leadership and the Spirit of the Gospel, 3. Leadership and the Application of Authority, and 4. Leadership in the Wider Church Context.

The first section, *Leadership and the New Testament Church*, has one chapter, 'The Ideal Church,' by Walter Chantry.



Bob Sheehan (left) and David Ellis at the Carey Conference

Leadership that is exercised by elders is of course, in the church. The Church is essentially one, but has many manifestations in this age. It is certainly not perfect, yet the Lord loves his Church. He also rules in his Church. It is 'not a democracy, subject to majority rule', but neither are 'its elders "lords" over the flock'. Christ is the Head of the Church.

There is no ideal church present in the world today, and there never has been one throughout its history. 'Anyone who believes that his own local church truly expresses or even approaches the ideal is deluded and is living in a world of fantasy.' But that doesn't mean we are to abandon the Church. 'We must both love the Church as she is and desire that she become what she ought to be.'

While there is no infallible church, a leading mark of a true church is its adherence to and love for the Word of God. Chantry brings out from 1 Timothy 3:14-15, where the church is called 'the pillar and foundation of the truth', how the church is both the

custodian and *conveyor* of God's truth. As the custodian of the truth, the church is 'to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints' (Jude 3). Elders lead in this, but they themselves must be subject to the Word of God. The members 'must not allow officers to do all the thinking for them . . . it is important that they question the teachings and decisions of their church leaders'. As the conveyor of the truth, the church's mission is 'to exhibit truth to the world'. Chantry points out the sad fact that some churches are so caught up in reforming themselves to the last degree, that they have lost sight of the vital necessity of evangelism. It is important he says, that 'as we build walls that keep the world's influence out of our church, we must not build walls that keep the gospel out of the world'.

The second major section of the book is entitled, *Leadership and the Spirit of the Gospel*. This section includes articles which deal with 'various facets of leadership style'.

The first essay (ch. 2) in this section is called, 'The Eldership and Protocol',

written by Erroll Hulse. It is the longest chapter in the book (the two longest being by him and Geoff Thomas, the two contributors from the U.K.). It is probably the most helpful and useful. 'Practical problems of a functioning eldership' are handled in a sober, down-to-earth way. Because our Lord requires that everything in the church be done decently and in order, then procedures 'for the right ordering of church government, particularly as it concerns those who rule, namely the elders', is dictated by divine wisdom.

The chapter contains a brief historical survey concerning problems churches have had with the concept of a plurality of elders. The Westminster Assembly had a long debate over 1 Timothy 5:17 and there was division of thought amongst the Puritans. Also, the pragmatism behind so many Baptist churches opting for leadership by one pastor and a board of deacons is discussed. Following this, the problems and difficulties churches have experienced with eldership are candidly considered. A list of the duties of elders is included. It is wisely suggested that the elders, just like the church, adopt a constitution and a covenant, in order constantly to remind themselves of their calling and of their responsibilities in leading the church.

The hard questions that are being raised about the functioning of elder-rule are given wise and perceptive answers. Questions like; What happens when there is a difference of opinion among the elders on a matter? What distinction is there between a full-time elder and a part-time elder? and, What is the nature of the elder's authority and how is it to be exercised? These questions and many more are dealt with and the suggestions should help to produce better harmony between elders who serve together in the church.

The next essay (ch. 3) is entitled, 'The Battle for Balance', and is presented by Stuart Latimer. To some people, the word balance is just another word for compromise. But that is not what the word means. 'To be balanced scripturally means to hold truths in biblical proportion and consider all the Scripture passages related to any position we hold.' We must not 'hobby-ride one element of truth to the exclusion of others'.

Balance in an elder is not an optional-extra, it is a requirement. Mr Latimer shows that the qualifications for the overseer includes the quality of balance. He is to be 'temperate, self-controlled' (1 Tim 3:2), 'disciplined' and not 'quick-tempered' (Tit 1:7-8).

The bulk of the chapter is then spent in a relevant discussion concerning areas where balance is needed. The church has often swung back and forth on the pendulum from one extreme to another. There must be balance in the *Preaching*. How easy it is to emphasise doctrine to the neglect of experience, or vice versa. Law can get out of proportion to grace, or grace to law, as can the sovereignty of God be unbalanced over against the truth of man's responsibility, or the reverse. There must be balance concerning the *Law*, or we will run to the extreme of Theonomy or to the opposite end of having no law at all. There must be balance regarding *Ecclesiastical Separation*, or we could either become isolationists or merge into 'a kind of inclusivism which pays no heed to what the Bible teaches about separation from false teachers'. There must be balance in the area of *Church Authority*. Soft, flimsy leadership is exercised on one hand, while harsh, over-powering leadership is displayed on the other. A caution is sounded at this point which receives mention in most of the chapters in *Shepherding God's Flock*. There is a serious epidemic

of severe authoritarianism in many churches today (chapters five and nine deal specifically with the evils of a domineering, repressive kind of leadership). An overseer must be firm and strong, but he must also be kind and gentle. This chapter is rightly named. We must battle to preserve balance!

‘Examples to the Flock,’ is the title of chapter four, written by Paul Clarke. Conduct which is expected of all believers, based upon Matthew 5-7 and Romans 12-15, is highlighted. ‘Overseers of the flock of God should possess and manifest in *Well-Developed Form* those qualities which God in his Word demands that all his people possess and manifest’ (emphasis mine). But then there is conduct specifically required of elders laid out in Scripture. Particular instructions were given by our Lord to his disciples, which has a wider application to overseers, the hardest lesson being, ‘whoever would be great among you shall be your minister, and whosoever shall be first among you shall be your servant’. Apostolic teaching concerning church overseers is found in Acts 20:18-35, 1 Peter 5:1-4, 1 Timothy 3:1-8, and Titus 1:5-9. It is imperative that elders ‘rule the flock of God, not as lords, but as loving and gentle shepherds. And just as they have Jesus himself and his apostles as their own example, so also they must make themselves “examples to the flock.”’

Included in this chapter are some of the hazards to which elders are exposed. Elders must be careful not to provoke people, not to misuse authority, and not to mistake the motives and actions of other persons. In his discussion, Mr Clarke seems unclear in saying, ‘men who are successful as fathers – and only such, Paul told Timothy, should be

chosen as elders. . . .’ Surely, 1 Timothy 3:4 means if a man has children, they must be in control. There may be men uniquely gifted and qualified to be elders who aren’t even married, much less who have children (Paul himself is an example). The chapter is then closed with warnings and encouragements to the shepherds of the flock.

The section on *Leadership and the Spirit of the Gospel* ends with the essay, ‘Pastoral Authority and Freedom of the Conscience’. The editor of this volume, Roger Beardmore, writes this chapter.

Roman Catholicism of the Middle Ages called for men to render blind authority to the priest. When the Reformation overthrew the priesthood, it insisted that ‘God alone is the Lord of the conscience’. However, in the Protestant, Evangelical faith, there have arisen ‘popes’ who abuse their God-given authority by usurping control of men’s consciences.

Mr Beardmore directs the readers attention to three areas: he recites four reasons why men turn their consciences over to others, 2, He describes when pastoral oversight becomes ‘lording over the flock’, and 3, He specifies four vital doctrines that must be understood if men are to be free to serve God. Godly elders who really care about the sheep cannot help but be convicted at some point in this discussion. The ‘Diotrephes syndrome’ infects us all to some degree. Much discernment is needed by elders in the evangelical cause so that there is no infringement, coercion, and tyranny over the minds, hearts, and wills of those who are subject to Christ as King and Lord.

Sections 3 and 4 will be reviewed in the next issue.

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