

REFORMATION TODAY



MARCH-APRIL 1992

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*Carey Ministers' Conference, January 1992 — We selected some of the better photos
Top from left to right: Pastors Hugh Hawes, Joe Hewitt and
Peter White (Conference musician)
Bottom: Pastors Brian Keen, Peter Howell and David Ellis*

The annual *Grace Baptist Assembly* representing about 90 churches and the *Carey Ministers' Conference* are due to unite in one conference next year in lieu of holding the usual two separate gatherings. This is for 1993 only. This **GRACE-CAREY** gathering is booked for May 19-21 (Wednesday to Friday) at the Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire. Details to follow.

Front cover: Prayer at a baptismal service at Ivanova, Russia (See News, p. 30)

Editorial

Spurgeon's Centenary

What would you do if a six year old child in your Sunday service repeated the last line of every hymn verse, singing solo, clearly and melodiously? Would you take him out and spank him? This was the dilemma of Charles Spurgeon's parents when their firstborn son returned from living with his grandfather James. James was the pastor of the independent church at the village of Stambourne in the county of Essex. It was the practice there for the congregation to repeat in their singing the last line of every hymn verse. James had taught his grandchild to stick to what he knew to be right and not to be deterred by anyone. Little did he realise that this would result in the unexpected embarrassment of the solo performance punctuating the Sunday services when the boy returned home! Spurgeon, in reporting this incident from his childhood, testified that it took considerable chastisement to get him finally to desist from adding the last line to every verse sung! This is one of many stories in the life of the man whose church became the largest in the world and whose sermons have been read more than those of any other preacher in history.

This year being the centenary of Charles Haddon Spurgeon's passing at Mentone in France in 1892, it was deemed profitable to devote three papers to aspects of his life and doctrine at the annual Carey conference for ministers in January (see report). Two of those papers in abridged form appear in this issue.

Geoff Thomas opened the Conference with a scintillating biography of Spurgeon. He is preparing his paper for inclusion in a book with the title *Spurgeon Speaks Today*. Geoff Thomas described the pervasive influence of Spurgeon's grandparents, especially James who was an outstanding preacher. Stambourne was a small village, yet a large church had been built after the Great Ejection of 1662. Souls came from miles around to pack this meeting house and hear James Spurgeon preach. There were frequent conversions under his ministry at home and at other churches. Strangely he declined absolutely to visit London. Such was his reputation as a preacher that after Charles had become famous in London visitors would travel from Waterbeach. They were drawn because they sought a preacher of the same unction as James. When asked why they had undertaken so long a journey the answer came, 'We would run our legs off to hear a Spurgeon!'

The anecdotes about Spurgeon's upbringing help us to see how exceptionally he absorbed theology and hymns. His grandparents rewarded him for every hymn he learned by heart. In his preaching he could recall at any moment the

most appropriate hymn verse and quote it perfectly. John Ruskin said of the young Spurgeon: 'Very wonderful. In Spurgeon's sermons there is at least one passage which no other man in London could have given.' This is true and there is a remarkable consistency of quality which runs through all 63 volumes of published sermons. The article 'Spurgeon and his Gospel Invitations' depicts the fact that the Holy Spirit is practical. He persuades men. He regenerates them. He does so by drawing them to Christ and uniting them to him by faith. In doing so he uses means. He uses persuasive preaching. He uses the invitations of the gospel. He uses the personality and love of the preacher. Spurgeon had so intense a love for the souls of men that he could declare, 'I remember, when I have preached at different times in the country, and sometimes here, that my whole soul has agonised over men, every nerve of my body has been strained, and I could have wept my very being out of my eyes, and carried my whole frame away in a flood of tears, if I could but win souls. On such occasions, how we preach, as if we had men before us personally, and were clutching them, and begging them to come to Christ! But with all that, I know I never made a soul alive yet, and never shall; and I am perfectly conscious that all the pleadings of all the living ambassadors from God will never induce a sinner to come to Jesus, unless Jesus comes to that sinner'. (Sermons, vol 44, p.55).

Spurgeon preached the doctrines of grace as clearly as it is possible to preach them. For instance it is hard to find any preacher more clear about particular redemption than he, or about the bondage of the human will. See for instance his sermon *Free Will a Slave*. At the same time we have persuasive invitational preaching of an order very seldom heard today.

As for politics it was said of Spurgeon that he was the only man who could return two members of Parliament to the House of Commons. He could easily have become a Member of Parliament himself but preaching the gospel held first place and everything by way of moral influence and social action flowed out as a consequence of that. David Kingdon shows that the extent of Spurgeon's practical social action was enormous.

It is a spiritual cordial to recite the events of Spurgeon's life and ministry for the very simple reason that the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ is so evident. To the Lamb of God we ascribe all the praise.

Special attention is given in this issue to the works of John Bunyan in 'Bunyan Lives Again'. Spurgeon loved Bunyan and described him as the greatest of Englishmen. That reference can be found in volume 2 of *The Life and Work of C H Spurgeon* by G Holden Pike, the six volumes being incorporated into two handsome cloth bindings, each volume at 608 pages, by the Banner of Truth (£29.95 for the set - see p.24 for special offer) That is a splendid way of celebrating the centenary. G Holden Pike who knew Spurgeon well for 30 years wrote his biography in 1894.

Look to the Lord Almighty!

Recently Martin Holdt was invited to preach to the National Party Conference, Transvaal, South Africa. He has sent us this brief report.

Early in December, I received an unexpected invitation from the National Party Headquarters in Pretoria, to preach at the Sunday morning service of the forthcoming National Party Conference.

Since the Party has become multi-racial and is supported by a growing percentage of English-speaking people, it was decided that instead of inviting a minister from one of the three main Afrikaans Churches, the customary service should be conducted by an English-speaking minister.

I was hesitant, not wishing to be associated with a political party. Yet here was an unconditional invitation to preach the Word of God, to preach to a regional conference attended by leaders of the ruling party, a party that has led the country since 1948. The enthusiastic support of our church decided the matter.

There were, according to the Registrar, 600 in attendance. The actual service was introduced and closed by the Minister of Finance, Mr Barend du Plessis.

I read Isaiah 22:8-14. After a time of public prayer, I began to expound the passage. I based much of my preparation on a sermon I once heard preached by Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones from the same passage when he marvellously expounded the section and gave it a relevant application at the time of the Suez crisis in the 1950s. Many of the points he made have remained with me. I sensed the earnest intercession of the church at Emmanuel and of my friends and was enabled to preach for an hour with more liberty than I have experienced for many years.

For all the beneficial changes in South Africa, great perplexities and problems remain. What is the matter? I suggested that the primary issue is not political, not even economic, not environmental nor even cultural. No! It is spiritual and moral! That is the message of the passage.

*'You built a reservoir between the two walls
for the water of the Old Pool,
but you did not look to the One who made it,
or have regard for the One who planned it long ago.'* (Is 22:11).

I pointed to the only possible solution to our ills, the gospel of Christ. I quoted from Arnold Dallimore's first volume on the life of George Whitefield where he



*From left to right: David Kingdon, Geoff Thomas and Richard Gaffin
Geoff has not grown 7' 0" tall but is standing on the platform!*

(continued from page 3)

showed that a massive spiritual awakening saved England from the bloody Revolution which caused disaster in France.

What is involved in looking to God? The first necessity is conversion. If Nebuchadnezzar, a man intoxicated with his own self-importance, could turn to God in humility and be converted, there was no reason why anyone present should not with God's help do the same.

I urged the hearers to recognise that in South Africa true peace can only be achieved when we return to God's ways wholeheartedly. Then we will have the inward spiritual peace of the gospel with the prospect of external peace as well.

I was personally overwhelmed by an awesome sense of the power of the Spirit of God at work that morning. I noticed many with tear-filled eyes, including the Minister of Finance. His concluding remarks lasted for ten minutes and it would appear that the Word of God had affected him in a personal way.

South Africa is a land with an illustrious history of revival. Today she stands at the crossroads of change: a time of possible unity and vision, or a time of faction and fragmentation. The paramount need is for a new spiritual awakening. There is a fervency in prayer among many believers. "Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down that the mountains would tremble before you! Oh, that you would come down to work wonders among us, converting wonders, wonders of peace and unity for your great Name and for your glorious praise!"

Carey Ministers' Conference Report

It was suitable that in January 1992 we should think of C H Spurgeon who died at Mentone in France on January 31, 1892. He was so full of Christ that there would be much to learn and to warm our hearts. And so it proved to be. Geoff Thomas opened the conference with a sketch of Spurgeon's life. We enjoyed hearing about the remarkable providence that took the child into the care of his grandfather James, an exceptionally fine preacher who had inherited an extensive Puritan library. Boyhood conversations with Will Richardson, a Christian farmer, laid the foundation for the John Ploughman books that came later. Spurgeon's conversion at Artillery Street Methodist Chapel, Colchester, was narrated in a lively manner. The fifteen year old convert returned the next week but was bitterly disappointed to hear that the wretched man of Romans 7 was not a believer. He had advanced sufficiently in that short time to know that that was nonsense theology. He was not destined to be a Methodist. Spurgeon came to London and soon became the most sought after preacher in the metropolis. This and many other aspects of Spurgeon's life and ministry were vivaciously set before us. I have enjoyed listening to the cassette as much as the original for the simple reason that there is so much of interest to absorb.

This paper was followed by that of David Kingdon with the title 'Spurgeon and his Social Concern', in which the roots of that concern were very well defined. In addition, the local church as the centre and source of good works was stressed. Every member at the Tabernacle was expected to get involved in practical work of some kind. An abridgement appears in this issue of RT as is the case with the subject of Spurgeon's way of addressing the uncommitted with the free invitations of the gospel. The full versions of the three papers on Spurgeon featured in these pages, along with other chapters, are in process of being gathered up into a paperback with the title *Spurgeon Speaks Today*.

Spurgeon lived in a time of spiritual awakening and being eminently blessed all his life with the conversion of many sinners his biography is always refreshing. For those who love pure gospel preaching and long for the conversion of sinners, his ministry is like a dream come true. It would be unbalanced if we were to omit the desperate struggle during the latter period of his life. Some years ago David Kingdon gave a paper at the Puritan Conference on 'Spurgeon and the Downgrade Controversy'. In Western countries we live, not in times of spiritual awakening, but rather in the shadows of unbelief and rejection of the Bible which was endemic in the Downgrade controversy. In most parts of England only 1.5 percent of young people attend Christian churches but well over 50 percent will watch popular sporting events on the Lord's Day.

It is planned that David Kingdon's paper on the Downgrade will also be included in the new volume. There are those who think that the great preacher did not do justice to the modernist debate. He derogated it, derided it, denounced it, but has been criticised for not properly refuting it. In defence of Spurgeon it can be said that many lives could be spent in refuting modernism without avail. Thankfully there are a few, *very few*, (B B Warfield was one and Gresham Machen another) high powered scholars whose calling it is to show the emptiness of higher critical speculations and theories. Spurgeon was never cast in that role.

A further anniversary is celebrated this year since 200 years ago William Carey left England for India. Daniel Webber who is the director of the European Missionary Fellowship presented the theme 'William Carey and the Missionary Vision'. He showed clearly how the missionary vision was born in Carey's heart, how that vision developed, and how it came to full expression first in the establishment of the Baptist Missionary Society and secondly in the enterprise of himself becoming a pioneer missionary. The speaker concentrated in particular on Carey's book which was nicknamed 'The Enquiry'. The full title read 'An Enquiry into the obligations of Christians to use means for the conversion of the heathens in which the religious state of different nations of the world, the success of former undertakings, and the practicability of further undertakings, are considered', by William Carey. This was published in 1792 two hundred years ago, and is even more relevant now than it was then. It was described as the most convincing missionary appeal that had ever been written.

In the first part of this work Carey demonstrated the binding nature of the great commission to the end of the world. Secondly he surveyed missionary effort from the book of Acts onward to 1792. Thirdly he provided a survey of the world rather in the style of our contemporary book OPERATION WORLD. Fourthly he considered the obstacles and objections made to missionary endeavour. There was the great distance to be travelled. There was the barbarous and savage manner of the heathen. There was the danger of being killed by them. There was the difficulty of supply. There was the difficulty of language. All these objections were answered. In respect of the difficulty of language Carey had himself already mastered six languages so that excuse was dismissed as unworthy.

Our visiting preacher this year was Richard Gaffin, Professor of New Testament at Westminster Seminary, Philadelphia, USA. He addressed the subject of the character of the book of Hebrews ably expounding, 'A Better Way', an expression used some 13 times, a better covenant, a better sacrifice, a better resurrection and so on. From the opening verses it was shown that in Christ God has spoken not only with a climactic word but with a finality that cannot be exceeded by anything else. In other words there are no further instalments.

Prof Gaffin established the character of the book of Hebrews as exhortation (13:22). By linking 13:22, 'But I urge you, brethren, bear with this word of exhortation', and 8:1 'Now the main point in what has been said is this: we have such a high priest' (NASB), he suggested we have the matrix of the book: the terrain in which the writer develops his message. Doctrine and exhortation are intertwined to press for practical perseverance. He emphasised that the heavenly high priestly activity of Christ is the main theme of Hebrews and that this is important to grasp from the outset.

Prof Gaffin pressed home that the New Testament believers are in a position similar to or analogous to the Old Testament believers in traversing a wilderness with its trials, pressures, persecutions and struggles. In the hard school of life it is utterly imperative that the believer be joined to Christ and be depending on his intercession. The wilderness motif is inescapably prominent in Hebrews. In his application he warned against any idea of amelioration, marginalising or reduction in the factor of this wilderness experience. Eschatologically we do realise the glory of Christ but deliverance from the storms and dangers and adversities of this world is not promised. However successful or otherwise the gospel may be there will be no golden age of prosperity in which the believer can relax or in which the conditions which demand perseverance will be reduced. It is a life of faith from first to last. He also challenged the idea of a premillennial return of Christ which would materially alter the present high priestly role of Christ on our behalf.

In his second address Prof Gaffin concentrated on Hebrews 4:14, 'Therefore since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess'. He amplified the reality that God's people are sojourners, a pilgrim people in the way. There will be tribulation and sufferings and disappointments with all the attendant tendencies to become discouraged leading to the temptation to give up, or even like the children of Israel in the wilderness, to rebel in our hearts against God. He showed that there is a tremendous urgency in the admonitions of warning to guard against an evil heart of unbelief and of falling away. Thus the severe extended warnings against apostasy in 3:12,13; 4:11; 12:25 and chapters 6 and 10. He warned against the tendency to view Christianity as a means to gain comfort and live as the world does for a lifestyle of comfort, too easily forgetting our identity as pilgrims.

Prof Gaffin showed that the warnings in Hebrews are not hypothetical. Only those who persevere will be saved. Election to life includes the grace to persevere. Where will we obtain the grace to persevere? The direction of the writer of Hebrews is to hold fast to Jesus the Son of God. By holding fast to Christ, we hold fast to our confession. Here is the foremost thrust of Hebrews. Jesus is a *Great* high priest. He is unique. He is in the noble exclusive order of

Melchizedec. It was urged that we often miss the reality and power of Christ's present work. He is interceding for us now. We tend to do justice to his work of atonement once and for all and not adequately experience the significance of Christ's present active work. This is so very important for us at the experiential level. Our union with Christ is a *now* union, a present union, a union of constant dependence on him and deriving spiritual life from him. We must be faithful to him who is working for us *now*.

The discussion session was used to make the most of Prof Gaffin's ministry. Taking the wilderness motif he had strongly asserted what is understood by the A-millennial position in eschatology. It was suggested from the floor that, considering Prof Gaffin's article *Reflections on Postmillennialism*, which is part of the book *'Theonomy, A Reformed Critique'* (see review in RT 125), it was time to redraw the lines and redefine the terms commonly used for prophecy. All those who take the 1,000 years of Revelation symbolically should be called A-millennial because they regard this whole final epoch before Christ comes as the millennium. Once that is established, we can then grade expectations as to what is anticipated concerning the future.

Those who anticipate defeat and the triumph of Satan and evil: **Minus 1**. Those who expect nothing in particular: **Grade Zero**. Those who believe that the gospel will spread significantly to every nation and people: **Grade 1**. Those who see in Romans eleven a divine program for history: Jews, then Gentiles, then both in plenitude of *salvation* blessing: **Grade 2**. Those who see in addition to the above the fulfilment of the promises made by the prophets (Isaiah 2 etc.): **Grade 3**. Those who see universal victory and a coming golden age: **Grade 4**. (Most Reconstructionists would be Grade 4). A high grade does not necessarily mean correctness. Motivation and realism are important.

Pastor Bill Hughes of Glasgow preached at the final session. Taking 2 Timothy as his basis he exhorted and encouraged the conferees to continue faithfully in teaching sound doctrine. He referred to many ways in which that primary pursuit of gospel ministers is discounted. His exposition was fitted absolutely to our needs and we were grateful for it and the power with which it came. Gary Brady said it was the best conference he had attended and so did Bernard Honeysett our veteran (who holds the UK record for conference attendance!). We magnify the grace of our God who grants us refreshment.

The papers described above are all available as single cassettes, mostly of between 60 and 75 minutes. Each cassette costs £2.50 to which 20p per cassette should be added for postage.

Cheques & Orders to: Carey Conference Cassettes, Crag House Farm, Cookridge, Leeds, LS16 7NH.

Spurgeon and his Gospel Invitations

Two subjects are antecedent to an appreciation of the glorious and uninhibited way in which Spurgeon addressed unbelievers with the free invitations of the gospel. The first is the historical setting, he was primarily an evangelist preaching during a time of spiritual awakening. The second is his Puritan theology.

1 The historical setting - an evangelist in a time of awakening

As the boy preacher Spurgeon had witnessed a time of visitation and reaping of souls at Waterbeach. His ministry in London which began in 1855 was a harbinger of the prayer revival of 1858-59. Preaching in 1858 (sermon 185) he describes reports of the revival in America.

‘The great revival, as it is now called, has become the common market talk of merchants. It is the theme of every newspaper, even the secular press remark it, for it has become so astonishing that all ranks and classes of men seem to have been affected by it. Apparently without any cause whatever, fear has taken hold of the hearts of men; a thrill seems to be shot through every breast at once; and it is affirmed by men of good repute, that there are at this time, towns in New England where you could not, even if you searched, find one solitary, unconverted person. So marvellous - I had almost said, so miraculous - has been the sudden and instantaneous spread of religion throughout the great empire, that it is scarcely possible for us to believe the half of it, even though it should be told us.’

Soon every service in London became a great evangelistic occasion. Exeter Hall in the Strand seated 4,000. The Surrey Gardens Music Hall accommodated 10,000. Finally, when the Tabernacle was built in 1860 there was room for 6,000. But Spurgeon preached in many centres. Through his ministry over 14,000 members were added to the Tabernacle but the aggregate added to other churches all over the country would greatly exceed that. In addition the power of the preaching was conveyed through print which resulted in a harvest round the world.

Converts from the area were interviewed every Tuesday afternoon, the whole afternoon being devoted to that exercise in which Spurgeon was assisted by his

helpers. The fact that he was a harvester of souls explains why he did not follow the Puritans in the method of consecutive textual preaching. For him it was vital that he be gripped or bitten by a text or theme. He often agonised to get his subject or text but once he arrived at that, his method was to open it up with an arresting introduction, expository content and a persuasive conclusion aimed at the heart and conscience. His preaching was doctrinally clear and as we shall see he was totally uninhibited in inviting and urging sinners to close with the free offers of the gospel.

2 Spurgeon's theology - wholehearted proclamation of the doctrines of grace

At the beginning of his ministry in London CHS made the 1689 Confession of Faith the doctrinal standard of the church. That Reformed and Puritan creed represented exactly Spurgeon's doctrinal convictions which he proclaimed clearly and powerfully and from which he never altered course.

Preaching a sermon on the text, 'And you will not come to me that you might have life' (Jn 5:40), with the title FREE WILL A SLAVE, (1855 no.52), Spurgeon began as follows, 'Free will is one of the great guns of the Arminians, mounted on the top of their walls, and often discharged with terrible noise upon the poor Christians called Calvinists. I intend to spike this gun this morning!' In this sermon he does justice to both human inability and human responsibility. He humbles his hearers - 'We do not preach this doctrine of inability to excuse you but to humble you. The possession of a bad nature is my fault as well as my terrible calamity.'

Spurgeon preached the doctrines unambiguously. He despised a general redemption that saves nobody. He preached particular redemption as clearly as you will find it anywhere expressed.

Should election be preached to the unconverted? Spurgeon preached every doctrine of grace evangelistically and discovered the Holy Spirit at work in conversion with every subject.

'My experience goes to show that there have been persons converted to God by doctrines that some might have thought altogether unlikely to produce that result. I have known the doctrine of the resurrection to bring sinners to Christ; I have heard of scores brought to the Saviour by a discourse upon election - the very sort of people who, as far as I can see, would never have been reached if that truth had not happened to be an angular doctrine that just struck their heart in the right place, and fitted into the crevices of their nature.' (*The Full Harvest*, page 241).

To those who asked whether they were elect CHS said that they could only know that by believing in Christ. 'Do you feel yourself to be a lost guilty sinner? Go straightway to the Cross of Christ, and tell Christ that, and tell him that you have read in the Bible, that "him that comes to him he will in no wise cast out" - look to Christ and believe on him and you shall make proof of your election directly, for so surely as thou believest thou art elect!' (1858 no.215).

THE CHARACTER OF SPURGEON'S GOSPEL INVITATIONS

1 There was no restriction in the invitations

Holding consistently to the tension or the antinomy of divine sovereignty and human responsibility meant that Spurgeon wholeheartedly and without restriction of any kind, exhorted unconverted persons to repent and believe and to come to Christ as the Son of God and receive him immediately as Lord and Saviour. He addressed all sinners without exception, promising them that if they came to Christ he would in no way cast them out. Not for a moment did he ever think that they could believe and repent by their own power, but he did not allow himself to be inhibited by that and nor did he ever encourage confusion in his listeners. Repent and believe they must to be saved. That was an immediate and urgent necessity. The details of enablement were beside the point. He exhorted them to come just as they were in all their sin and guilt. He guaranteed salvation if they would do that:

'O sinner, you can never perish if you will cast yourself at the foot of the cross. If you seek to save yourself you shall die. If you come just as you are, all black, all filthy, all hell deserving, all ill deserving, I am my Master's hostage, I will be answerable at the day of judgment for this matter, if he does not save you.' (1857 no.135).

Spurgeon never pandered to the idea that gospel invitations should be confined to the spiritually hungry or those who could trace some drawing in themselves. For him human responsibility was the bottom line and he pressed outright responsibility upon all with no exceptions.

2 There was flexibility in the invitations

Spurgeon was nothing if he was not flexible. Occasionally there are sermons which form an appeal or invitation from beginning to end. An example is the sermon entitled, 'Compel them to Come In', which was greatly used. In the

short introduction to the 1859 volume of *New Park Street Sermons* Spurgeon testifies that 'scarcely a week occurs without some case of its usefulness coming to light'. Yet there are sermons which are purely expository and which do not have any special invitation. In some sermons he explains the way of salvation but in others not. His immediate address to the unconverted can be expected at the beginning of his sermons in the middle or at the end, mostly at the end, or not at all. It was the general character of the truth and his evangelistic manner and his persuasiveness and above all, his evident love for souls that was so wonderfully used.

He used contemporary events in his invitations. At the time of the total eclipse of the sun he preached a sermon with the title, *The Solar Eclipse*. The text he chose was; 'I form the light, and create darkness' (Is 45:7). He used this occasion to provide an awesome description of hell:

'Soon shall your sun set, and set in everlasting night. A few more months and your gaiety shall be over; your dreams of pleasure shall be dissipated by the terrible wailing of the judgment trump. Can you guess what the Saviour meant when he said, "outer darkness, where there is wailing and gnashing of teeth"? Can any tell except those eclipsed spirits that have these many years been writhing in the torments of eternal judgment: can any tell what is meant by that "outer darkness"? It is darkness so thick that hope which lives anywhere cannot dart even a feeble ray through its impenetrable gloom'. (1858 no.183).

3 There was great love in the invitations

Those who heard him testify that they sensed his love for souls. The earnestness of concern which comes through all his sermons evidences the love of Christ for souls. This is a matter sensed rather than documented with words. The issue is perhaps best brought into focus by the way he urged the paramount need of love in his first sermon at New Park Street:

'John Bunyan gives a portrait of a man whom God intended to be a guide to Heaven; have you ever noticed how beautiful that portrait is? He has a crown of life over his head, he has earth beneath his feet, he stands as if he pleaded with men, and he had the Best of Books in his hand. Oh! I would that I were, for one moment, like that pattern preacher; that I could plead with men as John Bunyan describes. We are all of us ambassadors for Christ, and we are told that, as ambassadors, we are to beseech men as though God besought them by us. How I do love to see a tearful preacher! How I love to see the man who can weep over sinners; whose soul yearns over the ungodly, as if he would, by any means and by all means, bring them to the Lord Jesus Christ! I cannot understand a man who stands up and delivers a discourse in a cold and indifferent manner, as if he cared not for the souls of his hearers. I think the true gospel minister will have a

real yearning over souls something like Rachel when she cried, "Give me children, or else I die;" so will he cry to God, that he may have his elect born, and brought home to him. And, methinks, every true Christian should be exceedingly earnest in prayer concerning the souls of the ungodly; and when they are so, how abundantly God blesses them, and how the church prospers! But, beloved, souls may be damned, yet how few of you care about them! Sinners may sink into the gulf of perdition, yet how few tears are shed over them! The whole world may be swept away by a torrent down the precipice of woe, yet how few really cry to God on its behalf! How few men say, "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I may weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!" We do not lament before God the loss of men's souls, as it well becomes Christians to do.' (*Autobiography*, vol 1, page 329).

4 There was the reality of death and hell in the invitations

Invitational preaching is characterised by earnest pleading, solemn warning, as well as fervent reasoning, and promises for those who repent.

Whole sermons such as, 'The Smoke of their Torments' as well as descriptions of hell in many sermons were used to reason with his hearers to embrace salvation. Here is an example:

"When the damned jingle the burning irons of their torments, they shall say, "Forever!" When they howl, their cries echo "Forever!"

*'Forever's written on their racks,
Forever on their chains;
Forever burneth in the fire,
Forever, ever reigns.'* (1855 no.16).

And again,

"Remember, men may laugh at hell and say there is none; but they must reject their Bibles before they can believe the lie. Men's consciences tell them that,

*'There is a dreadful hell
And everlasting pains
Where sinners must with devils dwell,
In darkness, fire and chains.'* (1857 no.116).

In a sermon on death he faces his congregation with that reality by depicting the last moments of the unrepentant sinner:

‘And now you feel that you are expiring. Your soul is filled with terror. Black horrors and thick darkness gather round you. Your eyestrings break. Your flesh and your heart fail. But there is no kind angel to whisper, “Peace, be still.” No convoy of cherubim to bear your soul away straight to yonder worlds of joy. You feel that the dart of death is a poisoned dart; that it has injected hell into your veins; that you have begun to feel the wrath of God before you enter upon that state where you shall feel it to the full.’ (1860 no.304).

5 There was personal appeal in the invitations

Spurgeon had a way in his preaching of making every person feel that the message was specially for him or her.

On Thursday evening October 2nd 1873, he preached a sermon entitled *Peter’s shortest prayer, Lord, save me!* In it he urged:

‘I entreat everyone here to pray this personal prayer. I see some little girls over there; will not each one of you, my dear children, pray this prayer? - And you working men who I am so glad to see at this week-night service, do not go away without presenting your own personal petitions.’ (no.3186).

CHS observed, ‘I am so glad to see so large a proportion of men here. I always have a very great preponderance of men - therefore, I suppose I am warranted in appealing to you.’ (1860 no.346). It was observed that sometimes ninety percent of the congregation was masculine. It is suggested that one reason for this was the pressure of crowding disliked by women.

6 There was urgency in the invitations

It was Spurgeon’s custom to say, ‘Remember I have no authority to ask you to come to Christ tomorrow. The Master has given you no invitation to come to him next Tuesday. The invitation is “Today if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts as in the day of provocation. For the Spirit says today!”’

Concluding one sermon he said, ‘For NOW, mark it, *Now is the accepted time* to believe on him who justifies the ungodly. Oh! may the Holy Spirit give you faith that you may be saved now, for then you will be saved forever!’ (1856 no.83).

Yet Spurgeon disdained using decisionist methods. He fiercely opposed the slick counselling methods of the enquiry room likening that to Romish priestcraft (*An All-round Ministry*, page 372ff).

7 There was the offer of immediate justification in the invitations

Spurgeon was crystal clear in preaching justification by faith and in denouncing works as a way of righteousness.

‘Come to him as you are. But ah, I know that when we sit in our studies it seems a light thing to preach the gospel and make people believe in Christ; but when we come to practice it is the hardest thing in the world. If I were to tell you to do some great thing you would do it, but simply when it is “Believe, wash and be clean!” you will not do it. If I said, “Give me ten thousand pounds,” you would give it. You would crawl a thousand miles on your hands and knees, or drink the bitterest draught that ever was concocted, but this trusting in Christ is too hard for your proud spirit’ (1860 no.293).

‘When a sinner believes in Christ, his sins positively cease to be, and what is *more* wonderful they *all* cease to be, as Kent says in those well known lines:

*Here’s pardon for transgressions past,
It matters not how black their cast,
And O, my soul, with wonder view,
For sins to come here’s pardon too.*

They are all swept away in one solitary instant; the crimes of many years; extortions, adulteries, or even murder, wiped away in an instant.’ (1858 no.216).

8 There was urgent persuasiveness in the invitations

Every valid argument was used in his fervent persuasiveness:

‘I beseech you, my hearers, by the death of Christ - by his agony and bloody sweat - by his cross and passion - by all that is holy - by all that is sacred in heaven and earth - by all that is solemn in time or eternity - by all that is horrible in hell, or glorious in heaven - by that awful thought “for ever” - I beseech you, lay these things to heart, and remember that if you are damned, it will be unbelief that damns you. If you are lost it will be because you did not believe in Christ, and if you perish, this shall be the bitterest drop of gall - that you did not trust the Saviour.’ (1855 no.3).

Preaching during 1881 from Revelation 22:17 CHS concludes, ‘I hear Christ calling (you) from the throne. I hear the Spirit calling. I hear the bride calling. I am calling as one of those who have heard the gospel for myself. Listen, then. Oh, listen, was there ever such a chorus of united invitation? - will you not

come? "Stoop down, and drink, and live." May God lead you so to do, for Christ's sake! Amen.' (1900 no.2685).

Yet in persuading unbelievers we do not find any demeaning of the sovereignty God. Nor was there any compromise concerning the terms involved. 'I tell you, my Lord will never degrade his well-beloved Son by bargaining with you about him' (1900 no. 2685).

9 There was a spirit of joy in the invitations

Preaching on Lord's Day evening, July 6th, 1890 he announced during his sermon entitled *Harvest Joy*, that there were 82 baptised converts to be welcomed into membership that evening, 14 of whom came from the girls' orphanage. This exposition and many others ring with the fact that the most glorious thing in all the world is to come to repentance. The angels rejoice over one sinner that repents. The Lord's people are gladdened exceedingly by every soul that savingly believes. That sense of joy comes through in the preaching, and very much so in the invitations to come to Christ.

10 There was the sense of God himself in the invitations

During the early 1960s I came to know a trustee of Cuckfield Baptist Chapel who had lived into his 90s. As a young man he had heard Spurgeon preach. He described the unusual clarity and quality of his voice: 'It was like a golden bell, every word crystal clear.' But he remembered more vividly the sense of expectation, the total silence when the preacher appeared. This gives us a clue as we read the sermons which have been instrumental in conversions in many countries. If the sense of God and the authority of his holy Word carries through the pages, how much more was there to be sensed the power and presence of God in the preaching and especially as sinners were persuasively reasoned with, urged, warned, counselled, appealed to, commanded, and invited to close with Christ.

Spurgeon exemplified the words of 2 Corinthians 5:20, 'We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.'

Are we passionate and persuasive in inviting sinners to Christ? Some may respond by saying that that is not so easy since the number of unconverted sinners attending now is minimal, if not nil most of the time, and if some attend they have heard the gospel so many times that it makes the issue more complex. We are living in barren times and have to adjust our ministries accordingly but nevertheless we need to be persuasive, passionate and unfettered in the invitations of the gospel.

If you are a preacher will you search your heart about the ten points that have been outlined? Do these features characterise your ministry? May the Holy Spirit bless and encourage you in your great calling.

Spurgeon and his Social Concern

On 31st January one hundred years ago, C H Spurgeon died at Mentone in the South of France fully meriting the assessment of Sir Robert Ensor who wrote that 'if native eloquence and wide popular appeal be the test, [Spurgeon] must be ranked among the greatest English preachers of any age'. Spurgeon is remembered primarily as a preacher of the gospel. But he was more than that. He was also a man of social concern and social action who both directly initiated works of Christian compassion or inspired others to do so and encouraged fellow believers in their ministries among the poor and destitute.

In C H Spurgeon the preacher of the gospel and the man of social action were one. The social action flowed from the compassion for people which was so marked a feature of his preaching. Commenting on the methods of the Roman Catholic Church in going to the poor with material relief in order to win them to the Church, Spurgeon said in a sermon preached in 1862, 'I would that we who have a purer faith, could remember a little more the intimate connection between the body and the soul. Go to the poor man and tell him of the bread of heaven, but first give him the bread of earth, for how shall he hear you with a starving body? Talk to him of the robe of Jesus' righteousness, but you will do it all the better when you have provided a garment with which he may cover his nakedness. It seems an idle tale to a poor man if you talk to him of spiritual things and cruelly refuse to help him as to temporals. Sympathy thus expressed, may be a mighty instrument for good'.

1 Spurgeon's London

In order to appreciate the social concern of Spurgeon it is necessary to sketch the social conditions of his day. The London in which he ministered was a rapidly growing metropolis in which many poor people lived in appalling circumstances. In 1801 the city had 1.1 million inhabitants but by 1911 that figure had grown to 7.3 million. This growth in population was largely due to the migration of the rural poor to London in search of work.

The typical working week in 1870 was seventy hours spread over seven days. Working conditions were unsafe and accidents frequent. Unemployment was often the lot of the poor especially of unskilled workers.

Though Spurgeon lived in leafy Norwood, as much for his health and sanity's sake as for any other reason, he was well aware of the insanitary and overcrowded conditions of what today we term Inner London where disease was rife and epidemics frequent. In the sermon on 'Christian Sympathy' from which I have already quoted, he pleads with his congregation to acquaint themselves with the sufferings of the poor: 'If you were to go next Monday with some City Missionary to the East End, or St Giles, or some poor district this side of the water you would say, "Dear me, I did not know that people really did suffer at this rate; I had no idea of it; or I would have given more to the poor." We want to be educated into the knowledge of our national poverty; we want to be taught and trained, to know more of what our fellow-men can and do suffer. Oh! if the Christian Church knew the immorality of London, she would cry aloud to God. If but for one night you could see the harlotry and infamy; if you would but once see the rascality of London gathered into one mass, your hearts would melt with woe and bitterness, and you would bow yourselves before God and cry unto him for this city as one mourneth for his only son'.

From February, 1854 when at the age of nineteen Spurgeon came on a three months' trial to New Park Street Baptist Church in Southwark until his death nearly 40 years later he ministered in the teeming metropolis with its extremes of wealth and poverty, power and powerlessness, beauty and ugliness.

2 Spurgeon's Social Concern - its roots

Spurgeon's social concern has more than one root; in fact, in my judgment, it has several. The most obvious root and the most important is, of course, his biblical faith. For Spurgeon, it was axiomatic that faith in God's Son must lead to compassion towards one's fellow men and women and their children. For him compassion was empty unless it led to action to relieve the sufferings of the poor and needy.

But I wish to examine the roots of Spurgeon's social concern in what is, I think, a more illuminating way than simply to start with his understanding of the Bible. Of course the roots which I identify intertwine in the life of the man and, more than that, they tend to nourish each other.

First there is Spurgeon's upbringing. Born on June 19, 1834 in the small Essex town of Kelvedon, at the age of fourteen months he was taken to the home of his father's parents in the small secluded village of Stamborne. There he spent the following five years and much other time throughout his boyhood for a reason not hard to discover, he being the eldest of seventeen children of whom eight survived infancy. We might say of Spurgeon that he was town-born but country bred. To be country bred meant an acquaintance with rural poverty, with frequent deaths from consumption (tuberculosis) and with the desolating effects of alcoholism upon families.

A second root of Spurgeon's social concern is to be found in his political convictions. As a Dissenter and a Liberal, Spurgeon stood against the power and privilege of the political establishment which found its expression in the Tory party. He spoke out against the assumed airs of the wealthy and their expectation of deference from the poor. 'When people come out of church, what a gradation there is! Have I not seen this in many a country village how, first of all, the squire goes out, and then the bailiff follows, and then the poor people curtsy and bow and show their abject servitude and serfdom. And all this in a Christian land! In our Dissenting places of worship what stiffness there is; what rustling of the silks up one aisle and what quietude of the cottons in another!' He was emphatically upon the side of those who were excluded from the corridors of power because they were Dissenters in religion and as emphatically against those who looked down upon the poor from bastions of privilege acquired either by inheritance or wealth.

A third root of social concern sprang from his belief in the voluntary principle. According to this principle the Christian Church is meant to be distinct from the state, a company of believers as distinguished from a population of citizens. As a voluntarist in religion, Spurgeon was a strong opponent of religious establishment. He was a keen supporter of the Liberation Society, which was formed in 1844 as 'The British Anti-State Church Association' and renamed 'The Society for the Liberation of Religion from State Patronage and Control' in 1853. Thereafter it became known as 'The Liberation Society' and its meetings were quite often held at the Metropolitan Tabernacle.

At a time of rapid population movement from the countryside to the towns and cities of Great Britain, the parish system proved ill adapted to meet the spiritual and social needs of the urban masses. It appeared to many Nonconformists, Spurgeon among them, that the voluntary principle provided for a much more flexible approach.

The Metropolitan Tabernacle was, both in Spurgeon's own eyes and in the eyes of thousands of Nonconformists, a telling illustration of the power of voluntarism. Its various institutions, with the Pastors' College and the Southwell Orphanage the most prominent, demonstrated that without State aid, vital needs could be met by direct appeals to believing hearts and consecrated purses. Voluntarism, Spurgeon believed, was the best instrument of Christian charity.

Another root of Spurgeon's social concern is to be traced to the ministry of the church of which he was the pastor. Though the members of the church were not, it would seem, drawn from the lower working class to any great extent, there were certainly many artisans in the church as well as tradesmen and salaried people. There were also many working class people in the mission halls

connected with the Tabernacle. Furthermore many poor people resorted to Spurgeon for financial help and through the Orphanage he was intimately acquainted with and moved by the plight of the poor. Again with Spurgeon's encouragement, many Tabernacle members were engaged in teaching in Ragged Schools. So Spurgeon's social concern was nourished both through direct and indirect contact with the poor.

As I affirmed at the beginning, the most important root of Spurgeon's social concern was the Bible. As he read, meditated upon, preached and practised the Book of books, his social concern grew and found expression in a network of Christian enterprises of which he was the centre, though aided by many who worked heartily with him.

For Spurgeon, love of God and love of neighbour demolished the convenient distinction between the sacred and the secular which many make to justify a concentration on heavenly rewards to the neglect of earthly duties. In preaching upon Christians' calling to let their lights shine in the world, he declared; 'God grant that the day may come when the mischievous division between secular and religious things shall be no more heard of, for in all things Christians are to glorify God...'

A dominant theme in Spurgeon's biblical social concern is sympathy. Himself a man of deep sympathy, moved to the depths of his being as he preached to sinners and ministered to the afflicted, he emphasised sympathy as integral to social concern. On Sunday morning, 9 November, 1862, he preached a sermon on Job 30:25, 'Did I not weep for him that was in trouble? Was not my soul grieved for the poor?' The occasion of the sermon was 'The Lancashire Distress', the plight of the workers in the Lancashire cotton mills who became unemployed because of the drying up of supplies of American cotton as a result of the ravages of the civil war then raging in the United States. Spurgeon recognises 'the generous feeling towards the poor and suffering that exists in many an unregenerate heart'. Yet he insists that sympathy is especially a Christian duty. 'The Christian is a king; it becometh not a king to be meanly caring for himself... The Christian's sympathy should ever be of the widest character, because he serves a God of infinite love... To me a follower of Jesus means a friend of man. A Christian is a philanthropist by profession, and generous by the force of grace; wide as the reign of sorrow is the stretch of his love, and where he cannot help he pities still.' Spurgeon next emphasises that sympathy is essential to our usefulness as Christians. 'I know that a man in the ministry who cannot feel, had much better resign his office.'

One other aspect of Spurgeon's biblical social concern remains to be noted: his attitude to war. Though no pacifist, Spurgeon frequently emphasised the horrors of war, often in a jingoistic climate of opinion, when it was by no means popular to do so. War was sin not only because of the suffering it caused, but

also it went against God's scriptural commands. To him war was 'a great crime - murder on a huge scale - and little less than hell let loose among men. "Thou shalt not kill" is as much a divine commandment as "Thou shalt not commit adultery". No one supposed that adultery on a great scale would be right: then why should killing be?'

Spurgeon was prepared to oppose the 'periodical war madness', as he termed it, which from time to time seared the nation during the heyday of British imperialism. Many of his countrymen, he said, called for 'a warlike policy as loudly as if it involved no slaughter, and were rather a boon to mankind than an unmitigated curse'.

3 Spurgeon's Social Concern - its various expressions

As the membership of the Metropolitan Tabernacle grew to over five thousand there was, of course, the danger that many members would be content to occupy a seat on Sundays and do little else. Spurgeon was well aware of this danger. His way of counteracting this was both simple and effective. Let him describe it in his own words:

'Every member who joins my church is expected to do something for his fellow creatures. After I have had a talk with him and satisfied myself as to his sincerity, I say to him: "My good fellow, you seem to be a converted man, and I hope that you are truly a Christian; but, suppose you join the church, what are you going to do for your fellow men? If, after you are admitted, you will do nothing for them, I cannot help it; we have made a bad bargain, that's all; but no one shall enter with my will who does not promise beforehand to undertake, if at all possible, some useful work for the benefit of others." In many cases the idea never seems to have struck them that this was an essential part of Christian duty. It makes them think of what they can do and in most cases they profess their readiness to do whatever I think would be most useful!'

The effectiveness with which Spurgeon harnessed and directed the energies of the Tabernacle members can be seen in the vast number of agencies which emanated from the church as well as Sunday School work both within the Tabernacle and in missions connected with the Tabernacle. These works are fully listed in chapters 10 and 11 of Arnold Dallimore's biography of Spurgeon published by the Banner of Truth in 1985.

Kathleen Heasman is correct to point out that the Metropolitan Tabernacle was exceptional. There is no parallel, I think, in British ecclesiastical history, for one church originating so many and varied organisations. 'All this', she writes, 'was exceptional and due to Spurgeon's popularity which placed at his disposal not only a much wider choice of leaders but also much larger funds than were

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(continued from page 21)

usually available to the ordinary church.' Nonetheless it took a man who was more than a great preacher to have a vision of human need - spiritual, physical, social - and to motivate believers to respond to it in love and good works. Furthermore, it took a man who could impart vision and then delegate to others (such as his brother James) the implementation and outworking of it.

Spurgeon was not only the initiator of organisations; he was also the supporter of many charitable works begun by others. He often preached for the Ragged School Union, whose schools sought to provide a rudimentary education for the children of the poor and very poor. He was president of the 'Female Servants' Home Society', which had four hostels accommodating about a hundred servants. He frequently preached in support of hospitals and he also preached on behalf of a society which campaigned for shorter hours for shop assistants.

In a sermon on the Good Samaritan, he defended himself from what today would be a charge of preaching the social gospel; 'There are certain persons in the world who will not allow the preacher to speak about anything but those doctrinal statements concerning the way of salvation which are known as "the gospel"... We do not stand in awe of such criticism, for we clearly perceive that our Lord Jesus Christ himself would very frequently have come under it. Read the Sermon on the Mount and judge whether certain people would be content to hear the like of it preached to them on the Sabbath'. Spurgeon's own deep sense of compassion clearly made him broad in his sympathies.

What surely stands out in Spurgeon is his immense compassion. Moved with compassion as he preached the gospel of the grace of God to sinners he showed a like compassion to the poor and needy. A gospel man he was first and foremost but he was large of heart in a way which few of us are.

Our duty is plain: 'He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with [our] God' (Micah 6:8).

Our religion should be obvious: 'Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep ourselves unspotted from the world' (James 1:27).

Bunyan Lives Again

The Complete Works of John Bunyan in three volumes, Banner of Truth, 1992. 10.25" by 7", clothbound, 866pp, 766pp and 798pp, £49.95 the set.

The Banner of Truth have done more to promote Puritan literature than any other publisher this century. This can be seen convincingly by reference to Banner of Truth catalogues. Had not the Holy Spirit engendered an appetite for Puritan literature this could never have taken place. The peculiar character of Puritan writing is its blend of doctrine, experience and practice.

The desire for Puritan books can be illustrated by the annual Leicester Conference organised by the Banner of Truth. It was my privilege to encourage a young minister to attend for the first time in 1991. One of the attractions of the Leicester Conference, which is now the best attended reformed conference in the world, is the book sale in which bargains are advertised, enough to make a young pastor dream all night.

I suggested to my friend that he go early and get a place in the queue. Later he came to my room visibly shaken. I asked him what happened? He said that he had gone as I had advised and just before the doors opened there came a hush, the kind of hush that soldiers experience just before they go into action. The

moment the doors opened there was a titanic surge forward. He was bodily lifted and carried by the momentum so that his feet scarcely touched the ground. From my first floor window I saw men carrying great weights of volumes stacked above their heads!

Besides the three magnificent volumes of the works of John Bunyan, the Banner have produced a matching set of two fine volumes, *The Life and Works of Charles Haddon Spurgeon* by G Holden Pike, £29.95 for the set, (see Editorial).

If Bunyan and Spurgeon were advertised to preach on the same evening it would be an agonising choice. Bunyan was a preacher before he was anything else, a preacher of unique unction in the history of the Church. When we read his works, we read him as he preached. In previous years there was a certain Mr Ford who gave an Evangelical Library lecture in London. Mr Ford was endowed with a fine baritone voice. He so loved Bunyan that he knew whole sections by heart. In that lecture he treated us to vintage Bunyan. He re-enacted Bunyan's preaching. I will never forget it. It has been suggested, if you pricked Bunyan the blood that would flow would be bible blood! Perhaps that accounts for the extraordinary unction he enjoyed so much so that John Owen, called the Prince of the

Puritans, said he would readily trade all his learning for the ability to preach like Bunyan.

The production of these three large volumes photographed from the original edition prepared by George Offor in 1854 is as handsome as anything yet produced by the Banner with the exception of the three volumes of Matthew Poole. We need preachers with the unction of Bunyan, preachers who capture the imagination of the common people as he did. Strangely the danger of imbibing an old fashioned style of speech, totally inappropriate for 1992, is unlikely from John Bunyan, simply because he is unique. You can get his ideas and put them into your own idiom. I have noticed that Spurgeon copied Bunyan's concepts but he put them into his own lingo.

The three Bunyan volumes are as follows:

- Volume 1 Experimental,
 Doctrinal and Practical
- Volume 2 As above, but mostly
 polemical
- Volume 3 Allegorical, Figurative
 and Symbolical

Volume one begins with a brief survey

of the Bunyan literature followed by a 79 page biography of Bunyan by George Offor. Bunyan's own testimony follows in his work, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*. Then a work entitled, *The greatness of the soul and the unspeakableness of the loss thereof*. Thereafter comes his classic, *The Jerusalem Sinner Saved*. It would be hard to find a better sermon anywhere. You would think it was the apostle Peter himself preaching so eloquent is Bunyan in his determination to persuade sinners to repent, believe and be baptised. Every excuse not to do so is eliminated. Bunyan loved the subject of Christ's priesthood and wrote several treatises on that theme. *The Work of Christ as Advocate*, being an exposition on 1 John 2:1, is followed by fourteen works on central gospel subjects. It should be noted that typical of Puritans almost all that John Bunyan wrote had its origin in preaching. The material warms the heart and motivates the will.

Volume three includes the classics, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, *The Holy War*, *The Barren Fig Tree*, *The Life and Death of Mr Badman*, plus a few shorter works including the title, *A Few Sighs from Hell*. Volumes one and three are well illustrated with fine engravings.

There is an offer for the three Bunyan volumes at £40.00, and the two Spurgeon volumes at £25.00, including packing and postage which for RT subscribers in the UK will hold until March 14th, 1992, providing payment is sent with the order to: The Banner of Truth Trust, 3 Murrayfield Road, Edinburgh EH12 6EL.

Journey to Russia

A report by Roger Weil who is secretary of the Slav Lands Christian Fellowship, a small group of lay Christians who have been visiting Eastern Europe and what used to be the Soviet Union, for the past 30 years.

This year we received an official invitation which allowed us to stay in private homes rather than hotels. Our journey began in Moscow where for the first time in twenty years the Customs had provided a 'Nothing to Declare' gate! In former times this place was somewhat forbidding as the Customs were on the lookout for Russian Bibles and one fervently hoped that they would not discover them while inspecting one's luggage. This year it was a relief to carry a large box of Christian books through the Customs without the slightest trepidation, a welcome change indeed!

Nothing has changed!

Last year there had been queues, shortages of all kinds but still a Communist Government. This year we thought things would be totally different! Yes, the queues and the shortages were still there but not the Communist Party - hadn't there been a failed coup in August, hadn't the Party been banned, and what about the taking down of the founder of the KGB, Dzherhinski's, monument from right outside their headquarters, the Lubyanka? Surely everything was different now!

Not so, said my Russian friends. The Putschists are still not brought to trial, the Russian Parliament is about 70% Communist, there are still forty million

Party members, most of whom control the bureaucracies sitting in the same positions they had before, and finally the KGB has not lost its grip on every aspect of Soviet life. So what's new? On the credit side one can see that religion *is* rehabilitated, Marxist ideology and the leading role of the Party *have* been set aside, Soviet citizens *are* allowed to have Western money, free speech and literature of all kinds *are* back on the streets. But still people are angry with their leaders; the terrible emptiness of the shops, the high prices of the street markets, the interminable queues, the lack of jobs and the rise in crime. Some people think that rebellion against the present leadership is not far off, particularly if food gets any scarcer. It reminds one of the Israelites on their journey through the wilderness; all they could remember about Egypt was the food they had eaten there - they chose to forget the burdens they had borne and the awful slavery they endured. People still have short memories.

Why the shortages?

We discovered that there was no single reason for the appalling economic situation but rather a complex amalgam of interrelated factors. Collectivisation of agriculture has led to chronic under-production, the ordinary worker has no material reward for hard work; his salary is the same whether he works or not and without profit sharing he is alienated from the fruits of his labour. The collective farm is by Western standards of production a total disaster. There is a shortage of machinery on many farms with the spare parts often being unobtainable. The same is true for the

necessary vehicles to transport and distribute the food to the centres of population. On every hand one can see law and order breaking down and this applies also to agriculture. There can be little doubt that a lot of food that used to go to the State shops now gets diverted to the street markets and is sold to the better-off at exorbitant prices. Many accuse Communist bureaucrats in high places of helping to sabotage food storage, distribution and production; certainly those who know the system are well placed to know how to wreck it. Nationalism is also partly to blame. For example the city of Leningrad (now St Petersburg), which is nearly the size of London, used to receive much of its food from the Ukraine and the three Baltic Republics. All of them have broken their contracts, preferring to feed themselves or trade elsewhere. Finally people are losing confidence in their own money, the rouble. Food producing areas within the Russian Federation are saying to the cities, 'If we give you potatoes what will you give us in return?' We were amazed to learn that Soviet commercial firms within the country now demand payment, or at least a portion of it, in dollars - even taxi drivers don't want roubles anymore! These are some of the reasons why famine is a real possibility this winter.

Spiritual life in and around Moscow

For many years evangelical believers in Moscow only had official permission to hold services in one old Baptist Church in the city centre. The membership of over 5000 were obliged to travel in from distant suburbs. For a number this was a long and difficult journey. Now it is possible in theory to hold meetings in any public building.

The Central Baptist Church has embarked upon a policy of dispersal whereby members living in the suburbs

are encouraged to hold meetings on an experimental basis in schools. We visited such a meeting on a Saturday morning where between two and three hundred were gathered. We relished the sensation of taking part in an experiment (schools had previously been in the front line of party indoctrination including the teaching of scientific atheism). Well, here we were hearing the gospel for the first time in a Soviet school! Just as the meeting was closing, the leader caught sight of us and insisted we greet the congregation. Although taken completely by surprise certain texts came powerfully to mind as we ascended the platform. I was enabled with a strength which amazed me to exhort the believers from Hebrews 11:6, 2 Corinthians 10:4,5 and Matthew 9:37,38.

No sooner had I ended than prayer began spontaneously one immediately following another in most earnest supplication.

It is said that many people now have doubts about the need to have a central Baptist church office in Moscow to control and organise the thousands of congregations scattered over a land mass ninety times the size of Britain! Accordingly in different places Christians are setting up their own independent local missions and publishing ventures. The future of the central All-Union Council is, to say the least, uncertain. During the Revolutionary period 1917-1991 an unfortunate tradition took root among Baptist churches, namely that all pastors should only serve in a lay capacity. Now that the Church is free to evangelise, the strain on such men in answering all the calls on their time in this new era of opportunity, is immense.

We visited the city of Ivanova. The small Baptist church situated on its outskirts comprises 120 members, most

of them women, with four men trying to serve their needs as well as those of the half-million inhabitants of their local community. They are simply unable to do it. To care for the church, their young families and also their own jobs is already taking its toll. To release them to serve the city and its enormous spiritual needs they require financial support. Their church has never thought in such terms before but has recently been challenged to do so by three visits from foreigners during the past year. Each appears to have spoken of this need without prior knowledge of the situation and independently of each other. Being the last of the three, I was glad to learn that other visitors had had the same promptings as myself but concerned to see what a struggle the church was having in accepting the challenge. With Western money we were able to help these men whose ministry already stretches to local prisons, hospitals, Palaces of Culture and villages. The area superintendent with whom I was travelling is attempting to form an independent mission and wants to see these and other men released into full-time service. He believes his own churches, even though they are small and poor, need to be involved in their support, but in its early years he is hoping for supplementary support from believers in the West. I said I would inform believers in England to see if there was any response to this need; I can but earnestly commend it for your prayerful consideration.

Earlier in the year in co-operation with others, we published an illustrated Children's New Testament in Russian; delivery was effected in October but the demand is so great we are planning another edition early in 1992 probably of ten thousand copies.

Economically, politically, ethnically and spiritually the Soviet Union is convulsed by enormous changes. In itself change is not a bad thing providing it does not result in instability or turmoil. For this reason we should pray for the good order and stability of the new structures that will appear. This is the thought uppermost in Paul's mind when he says,

'Pray...for kings, and all who are in authority; that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and honesty'
1 Tim 2:2.

When we see the devastation and mass emigrations resulting from the civil war in Yugoslavia we can the better understand the wisdom of Paul's words; famine and war, death and destruction are inimical to the gospel of peace and the furtherance of the kingdom of God. The new opportunities in the Soviet Union are almost unprecedented. Before the Revolution in 1917 the Orthodox Church with the full co-operation of the Czarist power bitterly persecuted Protestant believers. Only during the early 1920s did conditions become favourable for presenting the gospel and opening churches. Stalin brought all that to an end in 1929 and since that time up until a year or two ago persecution and opposition had been the order of the day. The time is now right for a great expansion in all fields of Christian endeavour! Let our faith rise to this unique moment in history, to ask great things of our great and wonderful God that he would provide the means and the men to work in this great harvest field.

Saved by Grace

Saved by Grace - The Doctrine of Salvation by A A Hoekema, Eerdmans/Paternoster, 277pp. £14.95

Review by Bill James, who began his pastorate at Emmanuel Evangelical Church, Leamington Spa, last December

This is a fine modern, reformed exposition of the doctrine of salvation, completing Hoekema's trilogy on topics of Reformed theology. The first two elements were: *The Bible and the Future* dealing with eschatology, and *Created in God's Image* on theological anthropology.

Hoekema defines soteriology as, 'the study of the application of the work of redemption to the people of God,' rejecting broader definitions which include the plan of salvation or the person and work of Christ. His main chapter headings are therefore restricted to the following topics: The Role of the Holy Spirit; Union with Christ; The Gospel Call; Effectual Calling; Regeneration; Conversion; Repentance; Faith; Justification; Sanctification; and The Perseverance of of True Believers.

He declares his doctrine as Evangelical and Reformed and his fundamental orientation is familiar in its reformed emphases, but he is fresh and enjoyable in his style and unafraid of developing a new approach where required. This is evident for example in his treatment of the 'ordo salutis'. He rejects the idea that regeneration, conversion, justification, sanctification and perseverance are to be seen as successive steps, understanding them rather as various simultaneous and interactive aspects of the process of salvation.

Hoekema tackles the great truths of salvation with characteristic clarity and thoroughness. He includes in passing fine treatments of such subjects as the carnal Christian theory, gifts of the Spirit (especially healing), baptism in the Spirit, perfectionism, etc. The contemporaneity of the book is evident; for example in the section on healing he is able to interact with John Wimber.

Unlike some volumes of systematic theology, this is easy to read and enjoyable. It is right that reading gospel doctrine should lead us to thanksgiving to God, and concern for practical application. This volume certainly led this reader to those ends. Hoekema is ever warm and gracious in his style.

There are brief bibliographies in the footnotes at the end of most chapters to point us to further reading and there is an eight page bibliography along with indices at the end of the book. Buy this book, read and enjoy, then add the other volumes of Hoekema's trilogy to your library as superb handbooks of reformed doctrine for today's pastor.

Counselling for Family Violence and Abuse

Counselling for Family Violence and Abuse, Grant L Martin.
Vol 6 in *Resources for Christian Counselling*, Gary R Collins, ed.
Word Publishing, Dallas, London, Sydney, Singapore, 1987.

Review by Ruth Hanson

Here is a book about abuse that is as practical as can be and is distinguished in its biblical wisdom regarding victims and offenders. Even 'victims and offenders' undergoes a searching and compassionate re-interpretation.

Martin's presentation of statistics falls somewhat into the secular camp, where professional rivalries often lead to exaggerated claims. I wish the figures were handled more carefully and categories defined clearly, even in a non-technical book. It is a pity that such statistics have to appear in the prominently at the beginning of the book.

'Ordinary' physical abuse is given only one chapter, compared with three for child sexual abuse. Is this because the problem preponderates in those economically and educationally deprived groups which are less familiar to the church? The disproportion is, however, typical for the field of abuse generally; sexual experience for a child achieves much more attention than a damaged brain or spleen.

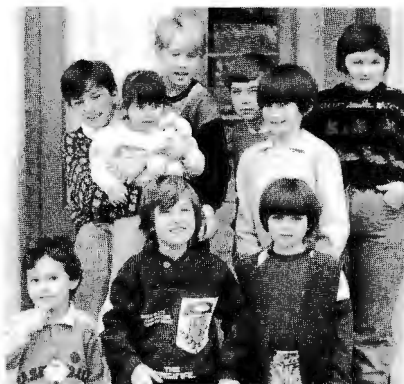
Another section is comparatively brief, namely 'Elder Abuse'. This topic has come under scrutiny more recently, so here the excuse of slighter knowledge is valid. Overall it could be said that the shortest sections of the book deal with problems for which there is the greatest scope for a) normal, but well-planned preventative education and b) networks of mutually supportive friends, both of which cry out for expertise to be found in the Christian community.

The only other reservation I have is that the presentation of legal and social support systems needs anglicising for England.

Any Christian needing an introduction to work in the field of abuse will find here extensive, reliable advice on what to do, particularly within a pastoral setting. Professionals will find it refreshing to review their work and acquire further skills and ideas developed within this balanced biblical approach.

Ruth Hanson has been involved as a research psychologist in the study of child abuse from the time that that study became prominent in England. She is currently leading a LIVES IN YOUR HANDS course for young people in need.

Romania (see RT122)



CFLI (Caring for Life International) Crag House Farm, Cookridge, Leeds LS16 7NH, reports that there are now nine children aged between 3 and 14 in 'Casa Bucuriei', the home in Paulis. These boys and girls have come from situations where they were at risk of entering huge Romanian orphanages, the shocking deprivations of which have been portrayed by the media. The children, featured in the photograph, are making excellent progress physically, emotionally and spiritually.

Progress is being made in preparing a second home 'Casa Noastra' in Arad, for a maximum of 30 children to be housed in three separate family groups. A steady stream of helpers have contributed from the UK and Netherlands in the complete refurbishment of these homes.

Irene West of Leeds Reformed Baptist Church is now Senior Residential

Supervisor at 'Casa Buchuriei'. Eunice Murray of the Peterhead Baptist Church, Scotland is the Senior Pastoral Administrator of CFLI in Romania.

Peter Parkinson returned recently from three weeks in Arad and Timisoara. He witnessed the continued powerful work of the Holy Spirit not only in many conversions and huge congregations, but in the depth of conviction and dedication seen in the believers.

Russia

Under Stalin every form of repression and persecution was endured by Christians including the reproach that full-time pastors are parasites. Now with doors opened everywhere the need for full-time pastors and evangelists is paramount.

Four years ago the Russian rouble was equal to one pound sterling or 1.60 American dollars. Now one pound is valued at 206 roubles! A full-time pastor can be supported for three months for £50. The photograph on the front cover was taken at Ivanova, north of Moscow. Those who are truly called to the ministry such as the lay pastor seen standing by the water, now need to leave their 'fishing nets' and go out to become fishers of men (Mt 4:19). The opportunity for men to go out into the harvest fields of Russia is most urgent and we should, as our

Lord commanded, pray that labourers will be sent out.

A TWR communique reports that Mikhail Gorbachev, former president of the Soviet Union, told western evangelical leaders that he strongly valued the Christian influence in the USSR in the aftermath of last year's attempted coup.

The historic meeting took place at the Kremlin on 4 November, last year. The nineteen-strong delegation from North America included Joel Nederhood of the *Back to God Hour* who reported: 'Mr Gorbachev made it very clear that he was not a believer but that he did have high esteem for what Christian people are doing and he indicated that he has a great deal of faith in mankind. He also indicated that he received a great deal of inspiration from the Bible which he claimed to read.'

The delegation, designated 'Project Christian Bridge', was made up of leaders involved in evangelistic and humanitarian ministries.

Germany

Jörg Müller writes from Warburg in Germany to say that *The Forgotten Spurgeon* by Iain Murray is now available in the German language. It is well known that there is a desperate need for a new reformation and for spiritual awakening in Germany and it is our hope that this book will contribute toward that end. Many Germans quote Spurgeon but little appreciate the truths which inspired him. Martin Holdt, after visiting Romania, was able to spend a short time with Jörg

and Heike Müller and so to become better acquainted with the church situation there. Jörg writes to say that he was unable to come to the Carey Ministers' Conference in January this year and deplores the fact that there are no conferences of that quality in Germany at present. He said of the Carey, which he attended in 1991, 'I tasted heaven's glory at Carey.' That may seem high praise to those of us who are accustomed to the level of fellowship and edification that is available to us at Reformed conferences here in Britain, but it does emphasise the need that exists in many Continental countries, not only Germany.

Australia



John Campbell (on left)
with Stephen Turner of New Zealand

Rev John W Campbell is the representative for the International Fellowship of Reformed Baptists in Australia and New Zealand. Having completed his M.Th. from Regent College, Vancouver, Canada, he continued studying while undertaking some responsibilities at the Lake Joondalup Baptist Church north of Perth. As from February 1992 he has

resumed fulltime preaching and pastoral work with other leaders in the Melville Baptist Church, near Fremantle. He recently suffered a leg injury necessitating a lengthy period in plaster. We trust that he will soon be fully recovered.

We also express warm concern and sympathy to our hard working Australian *Reformation Today* agent, Ray Levick, who suffered a broken leg some months ago. Complications have continued to prolong his convalescence.

Washington State, USA

A report from Pastor Paul K Christian-son, Grace Reformed Church, 1104 Diagonal Street, Clarkston WA 99403.

Right on the border of Idaho is the town of Clarkston, Washington where a Reformed Baptist church emerged from traditional evangelical Arminianism. Washington State is claimed by many to be the most beautiful state from a scenic point of view in North America. This area has much timber and logging, wheat and dry land farming as well as a history of mining. It takes a drive of about four hundred kilometers from Tacoma on the West coast across the state to reach Clarkston. The immediate regional population is about 50,000.

From May 22nd - 25th this year there is to be a weekend of Reformed Preaching, the visiting preachers being Tom Lyon of Providence Reformed Baptist Church, Tacoma and

Dr William Downing of Lakewood Baptist Church, Sunnyvale, California.

The vastness of North America means that in many instances it is difficult to find a Reformed church, still less a Reformed Baptist church. The 'Week-end of Reformed Preaching' has drawn enquiries from the province of Alberta in Canada, and the surrounding states. It is hoped that the work will grow and that other Reformed churches will emerge in that part of America.

IFRB

Seven of the eight chapters of the book *Unity in Diversity* are complete and ready for the printer.

The introductory chapter will address the issue of the 1689 Confession of Faith and its role as an instrument of unity. It will be shown that those who do not subscribe to every paragraph of the Confession are not thereby sub-reformed. The unity of IFRB is a unity in the light. We know wherein we differ and agree to differ, hence *Unity in Diversity*.

Cameroon

Pastor Mike Gaydosh of Calvary Baptist Church, Amityville, New York, USA and the editor are due to be in Cameroon, West Africa, for an intense tour of ministry during the first two weeks of April. The itinerary has been organised by Rev Samson E Khama of the Cameroon Baptist Convention.

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