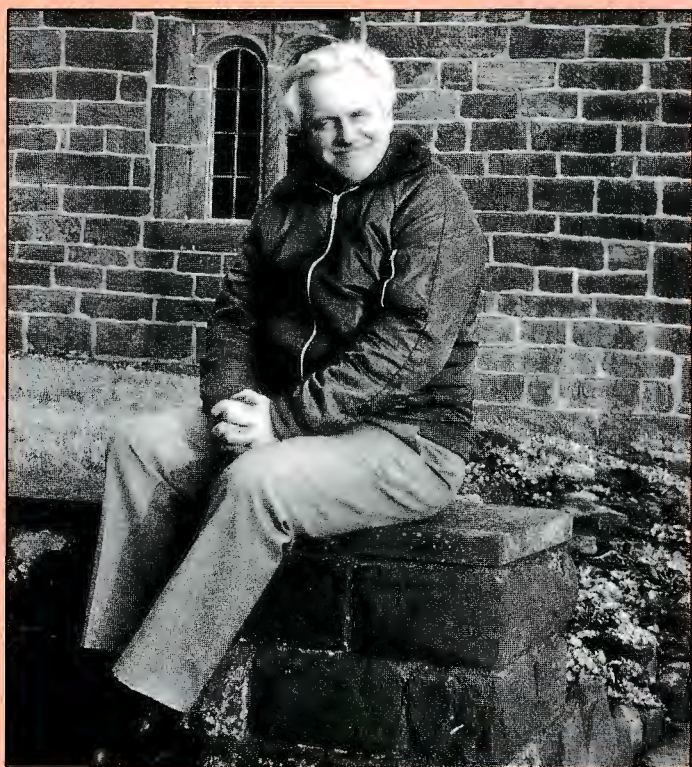

REFORMATION TODAY



JANUARY-FEBRUARY 1993

131



Mano Joseph of Sri Lanka and Conrad Mbewe of Lusaka, Zambia, at the International Conference in Toronto. See report page 31.



Pastor Walt Chantry who is due to minister at the GRACE/CAREY Conference, 19-21 May. The other visiting speaker is Baruch Maoz of Israel. For details write to conference secretary John Rubens, 22 Leith Road, Darlington, Co. Durham DL3 8BG.

Front cover: Pastor John Campbell, of Melville Baptist Church, Perth, West Australia, who acted as chairman at the IFRB meeting in Toronto (see report on page 32) pictured in front of the Puritan Chapel, known in the area as the chapel of Oliver Cromwell, Bramhope, West Yorkshire.

Editorial

A review of Don Carson's book takes prime place in this issue, not as though the order of articles is at any time to be taken as an order of merit. In that review article there is a reference to concerts of prayer in America about which we have heard nothing. The reason why we do not actively promote the concert of prayer for revival in which a small number of us are engaged is because of the conviction that the initiative must come from the Holy Spirit. Prayer together as pastors, or organised on an inter-church basis is little practised in the UK and should be encouraged. If you are interested in receiving concert of prayer details, please write to the editor.

'The Portrait of a True Pastor' by John Owen

It will surprise our readers to find a break with our policy which is to publish only the writings of living authors. Yet this principle is not breached entirely because this work represents John Owen in 20th century dress. Without changing his original meaning in any way whatsoever John Owen has been transposed into contemporary English. This came about through Michael Gaydosh, pastor Calvary Baptist Church, Amityville, Long Island, New York. The church has a publishing work which sails under the title of *Calvary Press* (Box 805, Amityville, NY 11701, USA). A principal aim is to popularise the writings of authors in the Puritan tradition. The booklet *Thoughts for Young Men* by J C Ryle and *A Dying Man's Regrets* by Adolf Monod are examples. The idea is to introduce the up and coming generation to the evangelical classics. Sharon James prepared the work by John Owen for Calvary Press to publish as a booklet. With their permission it appears in this issue.

Noteworthy is John Owen's emphasis on evangelism which is both refreshing and needful.

The Gospel Standard denomination

Most of our readers will have no idea of the background of the article by Bernard Honeysett. For their sake it is important to understand that hyper-Calvinism is a distinct position which denies the Reformed Faith as expressed in the great Reformed Confessions. It is not a matter of degree of Calvinism, like a sliding scale, but rather a question of outright difference. The Gospel Standard denomination consists of about 100 churches in the UK. They have an article of faith which states, 'We deny duty-faith and duty-repentance, these terms signifying that it is every man's duty to spiritually and savingly repent and believe . . . so that we reject the doctrine that man in a state of nature should be exhorted to believe in, or turn to God.'

This staggering statement is followed by article 29 which contains the following, 'We deny offers of grace, that is to say, that the gospel is to be offered indiscriminately to all.' The conclusion is found in articles 32 and 33 where we are told, 'We believe that it would be unsafe from the brief records we have of the way in which the apostles under the immediate direction of the Lord addressed their hearers in special cases and circumstances. Therefore, that for ministers in the present day to address unconverted persons, or indiscriminately all in a mixed congregation, calling upon them to savingly repent, believe and receive Christ, or perform any other acts dependent upon the new creative power of the Holy Ghost, is, on the one hand, to imply creature power, and on the other, to deny the doctrine of special redemption'.

The Reformed Faith emphasises in totality the sovereignty of God and at the same time the completeness of human responsibility. This is not easy to grasp. J I Packer uses the word *antinomy* and illustrates the matter with the analogy of light. Light, the experts tell us, consists of both particles and rays even though we cannot understand it. We do not have to work out how light functions. We simply switch it on when we need it! Deuteronomy 29:29 reminds us that there is the secret will of God and the revealed will of God. We are to live by the latter and not pry into the former. Don Carson prefers the word *tension* to *antinomy* to describe the relationship of human responsibility to divine sovereignty. Joseph Hart might help those who struggle:

*If aught there dark appear
Bewail thy lack of sight
No imperfections can there be
For all God's words are right.*

If a church or denomination is truly Reformed then reformation will continue. There are men of outstanding godliness in the GS denomination. We should pray that leaders among them will be used to achieve reformation today. For over 300 years the 1689 Confession has been used by Baptists who hold to the doctrine of particular redemption. Why not deploy the 1689 to replace articles which so patently contradict the Reformed Faith? The 1689 Confession embodies three great legacies: the gains of the 16th century Reformation, Puritanism at its apex, and Baptist ecclesiology.

Error or heresy?

It is helpful to observe the way in which the terms *error* and *heresy* are used. Heresy has been understood to mean a distortion of truth so serious that it destroys the gospel. Error is regarded as that which contradicts the truth, but not so as to destroy the gospel. As Bob Sheehan points out, failure to believe in Christ as both God and man is fatal. Likewise it is fatal to overthrow the doctrine of justification by faith alone (Gal 1:8).

It is important to discern whether a believer in error is crusading for that error or whether he is merely confused and hesitant about it. Furthermore the question

Continued on page 26

Don Carson's Call for Spiritual Reformation

A Call to Spiritual Reformation

Priorities from Paul and his prayers

Don A Carson 230pages large size paperback £8.95 IVP (Baker in the USA)

In his introduction Don Carson describes and partially documents the depressing state of the Western Church, weak in many ways but especially so through the increase of sexual immorality and covetousness. Lying behind the supine state of most churches is spiritual malaise.

Carson writes: 'Most pastors testify to the decline in personal, family, and corporate prayer. Even the recently organised "concerts of prayer" are fairly discouraging from an historical perspective: some of them at least are so blatantly manipulative that they are light years away from the prayer meetings held in parts of the world that have tasted a breath of heaven-sent revival. Moreover, it is far from clear that they are changing the prayer habits of our churches, or the private discipline of significant numbers of believers' (see editorial comment).

Don Carson speaks principally from a North American perspective. He cites a case of a North American seminary from which fifty students offered themselves for overseas ministry. When carefully interviewed it was found that only three of the fifty could testify to regular quiet times of Scripture reading and prayer. This took place during 1990.

The greatest priority in the Western Church today is the practical reformation of our prayer lives. As God's Word must reform our theology, our ethics, our marriages, so it must reform our praying. This book sets out therefore to think through Paul's prayers seven of which are explored (2 Thess 1:3-12; 1 Thess 3:9-13; Col 1:9-14; Phil 1:9-11; Eph 1:15-23; Eph 3:14-21; Rom 15:14-33).

Additional chapters deal with practical issues. For instance in chapter one a basic contention is explained, namely, 'Much praying is not done because we do not plan to pray'. This is because prayer is not esteemed as a priority. Several practical suggestions are developed.

A chapter is devoted to the importance of praying for individuals specifically, five pages of Paul's prayers being cited to illustrate the place that this should take in our prayer lives. 'Excuses not to pray' form the theme of a further chapter. Excuses considered include; 'I feel too dry!' 'I am too bitter!' and 'I am too ashamed!'

How God's sovereignty and our responsibility are compatible when it comes to prayer forms the material of a 21 page chapter. Here several passages of Scripture are used by way of elucidation including Genesis 50:19-20 (Joseph and his brothers), 2 Samuel 24 (David numbering the people), Isaiah 10:5-19 (God's use of the Assyrians), John 6:37-40 (Election and the free offer of the gospel), Philippians 2:12-13 (Our work and God's work in us), Acts 18:9-10 (Election and our responsibility), Acts 4:23-30 (God's sovereign will and the responsibility of persecutors).

Occasionally the author illustrates from his own experience. The passage Acts 18:9-10 is an example:

'My father was a church planter in Quebec. At the time, there was very little fruit. An exceedingly prosperous evangelical church in Quebec might have had twenty or thirty core people. Many is the time my father preached to a crowd of twenty. At one point, several Americans who had proved remarkably effective in ministry in French West Africa came to Quebec to look the situation over. One or two managed to convey the subtle message (without of course being so crass as to articulate it), "Shove over, you guys, and we'll show you how it is done."

Not one of those missionaries stayed. All left within months. I was old enough to ask my father why none of them remained to help. He quietly explained that they had served in areas where they had known great blessing, and it was hard for them to envisage working in an area where there seemed to be such dearth. I pressed my father further; why then did he stay? Why shouldn't he go some place where the power of the Lord was abundant? Why commit yourself to working where there is so much to discourage and so little fruit? He gently rounded on me: "I stay," he said, "because I believe with all my heart that God has many people in this place".

Of course Dad could have gone to his grave without seeing any of this fruit. But in the Lord's mercy, the harvest began in 1972. From a base of fewer than fifty evangelical churches, many hundreds sprang up. Where a major evangelistic effort in a metropolitan area might have drawn a few hundred people to hear the gospel, thousands began to attend. But the point is that this is merely another illustration of what Paul understood in Acts 18:9-10. God's sovereignty in election, far from discouraging evangelism, becomes an incentive to get on with the task.'

Don Carson's work is highly commended because it effectively exposes a crucial area of weakness and practically sets about to provide the remedy. The book is first rate in layout and the large size print enhances its quality.

The Portrait of a True Pastor

*The principal duties of the pastor by John Owen.
Transposed into modern English (see editorial)*

1 The duty of preaching and teaching

In Jeremiah 3:15, God promised to give to his Church, 'Shepherds after my own heart who will lead you with knowledge and understanding'. Anyone who does not or cannot 'feed the flock' by means of teaching and preaching the Word is not a true pastor. Peter (and along with him all true pastors) was given the duty of looking after the 'flock' when Christ called him to 'feed' his sheep (Jn 21:15-17). The apostles were to free themselves from other commitments in order to give themselves to the Word and prayer (Acts 6:4). Pastors are to labour in the Word and doctrine (1 Tim 5:17) and to 'keep watch over . . . all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers . . .' (Acts 20:28). This then is the challenge made throughout Scripture to pastors by God himself.

It is not just that a pastor should preach now and then, but he should lay aside other lawful employments, even other duties in the church that would distract him from this work. He needs to give himself totally to it. He needs to labour at this teaching to the very utmost of his ability, for unless he does, he will not be able to answer in a satisfactory way to Christ at the Last Day (Heb 13:17; Jas 3:1).

However, no-one is required to do more than he is physically able to do. Some may be restricted because of health problems. Some may suffer such disability that they actually have to resign from the pastorate. The edification of the church is of paramount importance. Thus if there are temporary health problems a pastor must do all possible to provide suitable replacements. If the disability (of sickness or age) is permanent then it is a solemn duty to resign.

In every age there is scorn and contempt for diligent and systematic preaching. Some advocate abandoning such preaching and substituting the reading of the liturgy. But to deny the necessity and centrality of preaching moves dangerously down the path of denying Christ himself.

What then is necessary for effective performance of this primary pastoral function of preaching? There are several qualifications.

i Spiritual wisdom and understanding of the mysteries of the gospel. The minister must be able to declare to the church the 'whole counsel of God' and the 'unsearchable riches of Christ' (Acts 20:27; 1 Cor 2:4-7; Eph 3:8-11). Most church members, but especially the more experienced ones, do have spiritual

insight into these truths. Paul prays that *all* believers might have such insight (Eph 1:15-19). Therefore if pastors do not have some degree of distinction in their own grasp of truth, they cannot be useful in leading their congregations forward to more mature understanding.

ii Experience of the power of the truth in their own souls. Without such experience ministerial work will be lifeless and heartless. A man only preaches a sermon well to others if he has first preached it to himself. If he does not thrive on the 'food' he prepares, he will not be skilled at making it appetizing for others. Indeed, for all he knows, it might be poisonous in its effects if he has not tasted it first. If the Word does not dwell in power in us, it will not pass in power from us. No-one is more miserable than the man who tries to persuade others of what he does not himself believe. Pastors who lack experience of the power of the gospel preach dead sermons.

iii Skill to divide the Word correctly (2 Tim 2:15). This requires wisdom in the practical task of discerning the suitable and wholesome food for the various different hearers. This requires in turn:

iv Discernment of the condition of the congregation. The preacher has to discern the congregation: their strength or weakness; their growth or otherwise in doctrine; their temptations; their growth or decline in spirituality. The overall state of the congregation should be discerned, but so should the state of individual members. Without such insight, a preacher is beating the air. The pastor does not preach sermons for his own benefit, but he is dangerously close to this if he does not apply general doctrines to the actual situation of his hearers.

v Zeal for the glory of God and compassion for the souls of men. If preachers do not exercise zeal and compassion, then the very soul of preaching is lost.

These five considerations concerning the preaching ministry are in a sense very obvious and yet they must move all pastors to cry out with Paul, 'Who is sufficient for these things?' (2 Cor 2:16). Even listing them should stir those engaged in preaching to more fervent prayer for divine help and assistance. No-one should enter pastoral ministry unless there is commitment to this primary task of preaching.

2 The second duty is continual prayer

Many scriptures point to the centrality of this duty (Jas 5:16; Jn 17:20; Ex 22:11; Deut 9:18; Lev 16:24; 1 Sam 12:23; 2 Cor 13:7-9; Eph 1:15-19; 3:14; Phil 1:4; Col 1:3; 2 Thess 1:11). 'We will give ourselves continually to prayer' (Acts 6:4). Without this no-one can or does preach as he ought. Performance of this duty is the bench-mark of the sincerity of all other pastoral duties. Prayer is so

imperative for all pastors that whatever is done without it is of no esteem in the sight of the Lord Jesus. Such prayer should include:

i Prayer for the success of the Word. All the objectives of preaching should be covered in prayer for they involve the work of God himself. Such objectives include the strengthening of the hearers in their duties; their growth in faith and love; the increase of their enjoyment of God himself. It is a contradiction in terms to preach such things without accompanying the preaching with constant and fervent prayer.

ii Prayer against the temptations to which the church is commonly exposed. Differing circumstances involve different temptations, but each minister should remember that churches have been devastated and individual believers lastingly damaged when temptations are entertained. There are peculiar temptations which accompany peace and prosperity and others which go along with persecution and adversity. Watchful, fervent prayer is always essential.

iii Prayer for the particular needs of individual members. At any time some may be spiritually sick, tempted, confused, wandering, downcast through sin or failure, or troubled in spirit for an unusual reason. Ministers should lift up such needy ones in their daily prayers.

iv Prayer for the presence of Christ whenever the church is gathered together. Pastors should pray continually for the presence of the Lord himself in the meetings and for all the glorious signs of his presence. Only the presence of Jesus Christ gives life and power to the services. This is evident when his Spirit accompanies the outward ordinances with gracious divine power, shown by his working on the minds and hearts of the congregation.

v Prayer for their own preservation in faith, love and fruitfulness. Ministers need of course to bring their own duties before the Lord in prayer, that the performance of all these duties would be pleasing to him. In engaging in such prayers the pastor will see his congregation blessed. But in addition he will find his heart and mind more and more filled with love in the exercise of all aspects of his work.

3 The third duty is the proper administration of the sacraments

Ministers are responsible as stewards in the house of Christ for the orderly administration of the sacraments, which confirm and apply the preached Word. They should ensure the frequent celebration of the Lord's Supper and oversee all the circumstances of the administration of both ordinances: time, place, propriety. They should insist on the simplicity of the New Testament order, not allowing introduction of additions which are simply of human institution.

Gradual additions in the past led ultimately to the idolatry of the Roman Catholic mass. Finally ministers must ensure that the ordinances are not indiscriminately applied. It is a vital part of the ministerial duty to take great care that these holy sacraments are only administered to those who qualify according to the rule of the gospel.

4 The fourth duty is to preserve the truth and defend it against opposition (Titus 1:9-11)

The preservation of the faith delivered to the saints is committed in a special way to pastors of the churches. Paul emphatically and frequently repeats this charge to Timothy and with him to all who preach the Word (1 Tim 1:3,4; 4:6,7,16; 6:20; 2 Tim 1:14; 2:25; 3:14-17). The same charge was given to the elders at Ephesus (Acts 20:28-31). Paul says of himself that the glorious gospel of the blessed God was committed to his trust (1 Tim 1:11) and this is true of all pastors. They should all aim to have the testimony of the apostle at the conclusion of their ministries: 'I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith' (2 Tim 4:7). The Church is the pillar and ground of the truth and it is so principally in its ministry. Neglect of this duty has resulted in appalling errors and heresies. Sadly, those whose duty it was to preserve the faith have often done the reverse. In a day when gospel truth is under attack from all sides, it is incumbent on true pastors to defend truth. If they are to do so effectively the following characteristics are essential:

i Clear understanding of doctrine. This can only be attained by diligent study, along with sincere prayer for illumination. Men cannot preserve for others that which they are ignorant of themselves. Truth may be lost by weakness as well as by wickedness.

ii Love of the truth. Unless we regard truth as the pearl of great price, we will not attend to its preservation with the care which is required. Some are ready to sell the truth very quickly and some are just indifferent to it. There are vital truths which our forefathers were ready to die for, which are now ignored or opposed by ministers today.

iii Caution in allowing or encouraging novelties. The Church has often been damaged when some have indulged in speculation, needless conjectures and new ideas.

iv Education and intellectual ability to discern and refute enemies of the truth. It is necessary to stop the mouths of adversaries and convince those taken in by them. This duty cannot be performed without learning and a good measure of intellectual clarity, along with spiritual discernment.

v Strong affirmation of the central truths. Truth can be betrayed by feeble presentation as well as by outright denial.

vi Careful watch over the congregation. The minister must look out for the danger of false teachers coming from outside, as well as for any errors within the congregation.

vii Co-operation in this task with elders and representatives of sister churches. When churches share a common faith there should be assistance in defending this faith.

Surveying the range of duties associated with defending the faith, it should be apparent that a high degree of education, study, diligence and intellect are required of the pastor. Men might be useful to the Church in other capacities, but if they are weak in these areas they should be very cautious, and make use of the advice and counsel of those to whom God has entrusted greater abilities.

5 The fifth duty is to work for conversions

While it is God alone who converts, the means of conversion are entrusted to the Church. One of the primary functions of the Church is the conversion of souls, for when there are none left to be saved, there will be no more Church on earth. God designs through his Church to enlarge the kingdom of Christ, to spread the light of the gospel, to gather all of Christ's sheep into his fold. The main instrument in all these is the preaching of the Word, which is committed to the pastors of the churches. Admittedly some may be converted by the presentation of the Word by believers who are not ordained. This is to be expected, for it is the gospel itself which is the power of God for salvation, whoever communicates it.

The witness and teaching of both men and women in their places of work may be effectual to the salvation of souls. For very often the exercise of spiritual gifts by those who are not church officers may result in conversions (1 Cor 14:24,25; Phil 1:14,15,18; 1 Pet 4:10,11). But this does not detract at all from the fact that the preaching of the gospel is committed in the first place to the pastors. And the primary object of the preaching is those still in the world. The apostles and evangelists were first to make disciples by the preaching of the gospel (1 Cor 1:17). Secondly they were to teach those who were converted to observe all of Christ's commands. In following this part of their commission, they gathered disciples of Christ into churches, under the care of church officers. However, in our day, pastors have as their first duty to teach the disciples of Christ, to preach to and watch over the particular flock they work amongst. They are not ordinarily to continually leave their church and engage in itinerant evangelism, although in some cases the edification of a particular church should for a while give way to the need to reach the lost. But in the discharge of ordinary pastoral duties there are opportunities to seek the conversion of souls.

i The gospel should be preached to the unconverted in the congregation. Certainly the pastor is strictly the pastor only of the members of the church, but he is also a minister of Christ and thus committed with the duty of preaching the gospel with the aim of converting sinners.

ii The pastor may occasionally preach in other places. In the providence of God there will be opportunities for a pastor to preach in places other than his own church. The pastoral office is not left at home when he takes up these opportunities. Wherever a true pastor preaches, he preaches as a minister. The importance of the conversion of souls is so great that the edification and enjoyment of a particular church should give place to this when providential opportunities arise. The harvest is great and there are not enough labourers, so it is not only lawful, it is sometimes the duty of pastors to leave regular duties and engage in evangelistic preaching of the Word.

When it is understood by the local church that the function of any particular church is the edification and good of the whole universal Church and that it is actually to their advantage to seek the glory of Christ in the whole Church, then they will not resent the pastor engaging in evangelistic endeavours. The good shepherd will leave the ninety nine to seek the one wanderer. We are sometimes to leave the few for a while in order to seek the great multitudes of wanderers.

The most eminent ministers of past years have been those whose ministry God has blessed to the conversion of souls. To infer that they thereby neglected their pastoral role is to cast away the crown and destroy the principal glory of the ministry.

6 The sixth duty is to comfort the afflicted

Like the Lord Jesus, the pastor requires the tongue of the learned in order to speak a word in season to the weary. Like the Lord Jesus he must be able to minister to those who are tempted. Christ's earthly life was the time of his temptation and he is most suited to the priestly office in that he has a feeling for our sufferings. Now his whole flock on earth is a company of those suffering temptation. Those who, under him, have charge of his flock ought to support those who are tempted. Among the flock are those with distinct and unusual griefs. Some at the time of conversion have very powerful convictions. Some later relapse into sins. Some suffer terrible afflictions. Some seem to suffer divine desertion, others suffer tremendous buffeting from Satan. The doubts and fears which arise in the minds of those suffering in these ways may drive them almost to despair. Thus the pastor must:

i Understand the various cases of temptation that will arise. Such understanding will result from experience in how the Spirit of God works in the souls of men,

experience of the conflict between the flesh and the Spirit, experience of the methods and tricks of Satan and his forces, and experience of the nature of divine desertions. Careful study of, and meditation in, the Scriptures is essential, along with fervent prayer, experience of fighting temptation in one's own soul, and diligent observation of how God deals with other believers.

ii Willingness to minister to individual needs. Pastors should never regard individuals in distress as unnecessary and annoying diversions. Helping such individuals is a primary part of their office. To seem unapproachable, to have an appearance of unconcern, and thus to discourage those in distress from coming for help is to push away the lame and diseased and to deny the care of Christ for the flock (Isa 11:11). Rather the true pastor will actively seek out the distressed to give them counsel and direction.

iii Patience with the failings of the tempted. The pastor must deal tenderly with those undergoing temptation, who may be ignorant, slow to believe, even rude and abrupt. Any such tendencies will be exacerbated by their temptations, which will confuse their minds and fill them with perplexity. In such a state they will be fragile and if they are not treated with great patience and gentleness they may fall away altogether. In the discharge of the pastoral office there is nothing of greater importance than this. It demands humility, patience, self-denial, spiritual wisdom and experience.

7 The seventh duty is identification with church members in their trials and troubles

Performance of this duty enables the true pastor to resemble Jesus Christ himself. The chief comfort of suffering believers is Christ's compassion for his people, and all who have been entrusted with pastoral office should evidence similar compassion. 'Who is weak and I am not weak? Who is offended and I burn not?' asked the apostle (2 Cor 11:29). Unless this compassion and goodness run like a thread through every aspect of the pastor's work, then he cannot be said to be a biblical shepherd. It is a scandal if any pose as ministers but live for wealth and pleasure when some of their flock are in poverty. An essential element of this duty is care of the poor and visitation of the sick.

8 The eighth duty is the responsibility for the government of the church

i The admission and exclusion of members. Matters of membership are to be addressed by the elders of the church. Just as any voluntary society is able to receive into membership those who abide by its rules, or withhold privileges from those who refuse to be bound by its regulations, so too the church. The church as a whole consents to commit to the elders authority for the admission and exclusion of members.

ii The direction of the church. The pastor should provide overall spiritual direction for the church members. Leadership should be given in terms of mutual love, personal holiness, moral obedience, service to others and performance of various duties to other members of the church.

iii Organisation of the meetings of the church. The overall principle to be followed is that all should be done decently and in order. The elders must ensure that time, place and order of service or meeting are all suitable and glorifying. Provision must be made as appropriate for extra or special meetings or duties.

9 The ninth duty is to encourage the unity of like-minded churches

Pastors have a duty to edify the wider Church. This may be exercised by means of letters of advice, encouragement, consolation or of testimony. It may be by attending synods for joint consultation (this was vital in the early Church). This duty must be attended to and a narrow parochialism avoided.

10 The tenth duty is a humble, holy and exemplary manner of life

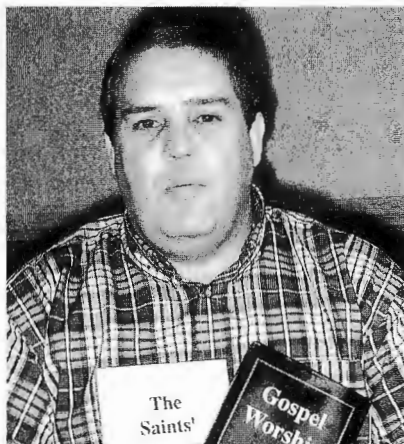
Scripture, the example of Christ and the apostles, religion itself – all prove that a godly life is indispensable to gospel ministry. Many examples could be quoted to show that the ruin of Christian religion in the nations where it has been professed, and the subsequent ruin of those nations, has proceeded from the ambition, pride, luxury, immorality and profanity of the supposed ‘clergy’. It is clear that whatever else takes place in the church, if the ministers are not exemplary in gospel obedience and holiness, then religion will have no credibility. There will be no power or glory in religion if those admitted to pastoral office are frivolous, irreverent, barren of spiritual conversation, careless of family devotions, materialistic, contentious or immoral.

To treat this matter fully, it would be necessary to expound the New Testament qualifications for elders (1 Tim 3:2-7; Tit 2:6-9), but that is not possible here.

All churches would do well to consider the great burden which lies upon their ministers in the honourable discharge of their duties. Surely consideration of this will move members to fervent prayer for their pastors. Sincere intercession should be made that ministers would properly fulfil these heavy responsibilities. Such consideration should also move churches to ensure that their pastors do not have anxieties and troubles in providing for themselves and their families. Generous provision should be made so that the pastor can devote himself fully and without distraction to the work to which he has been called.

The Story of Soli Deo Gloria

Don Kistler, founder of the publishing house, *Soli Deo Gloria*, 213, W Vincent Street, Ligonier, PA 15658, USA, was born in northern California in 1949, the second of five sons. His father was a state policeman. He was brought up as a dispensational, Arminian Baptist. At the age of five he walked the aisle in his church to become thereafter a professing Christian in whom there was little evidence of grace. The category referred to as 'carnal Christian' was an accurate description of him in later life because, during and after his college years, he became quite a hard liver, drinking heavily, using drugs at times, often drunk on Saturday night only to teach Sunday School the next morning on the Lord's day.



Don Kistler

sermons by MacArthur on Matthew 7:21-23:

'Not every one who says to me, "Lord, Lord," will enter into the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?" Then I will tell them plainly, "I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!"'

In about 1977 he felt the need to research his genealogy to find some sense of personal identity. This led to a spiritual awakening. His father's line took him back to Jonathan Edwards while his mother's line went back through Oliver Cromwell. If Christianity was a matter of blood descent, he would be a Puritan! He began reading the works of Edwards simply out of ancestral curiosity while attending Grace Community Church (John MacArthur Jn) in southern California. For most of his adult life, Kistler was a college football coach (American football). This vocation took him to the state of Missouri for two years. During a vacation period he flew back to southern California to attend services at MacArthur's church. It was during this time in 1979 that he was converted in a most powerful way upon hearing two

The two sermons were entitled, 'Empty Words' and 'Empty Hearts'. The overwhelming effects illumined Don to realise that all his profession until then was a carnal profession, void and destitute of spiritual reality. On his way home after that second sermon, he cried out with all his being for mercy, and repented of all his hypocrisy. He realised that the 'decision' of his young life was self-centred, not God-centred,

and that for conversion to be legitimate, it had to be for God's glory, not for personal gain.

Immediately he began to experience the reality of spiritual life and the power of the Holy Spirit. The practical outcome was twofold. First there was a strong desire for holiness, and to live 'not according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit' (Rom 8:3), and secondly Don experienced tangible power by the Spirit to 'put to death the misdeeds of the body' (Rom 8:13), mortifying 'whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed which is idolatry' (Col 3:5), because 'sin shall not be your master' (Rom 6:14). Don Kistler testifies that specific time as being the time of his new birth. He was spiritually dead before then, being subject only to conviction of sin and guilt; but from that time forward he was energised and quickened in the way of holiness.

In 1979 he began to listen to tapes of R C Sproul and was thereby introduced to the books and tapes of Dr John Gerstner, who later tutored Don privately in theology for one year. In 1982 he returned to California and sat once again under the ministry of John MacArthur, who was becoming more and more enamoured with the writings of the Reformers and Puritans. MacArthur had already admired Baxter's 'Reformed Pastor' and Charnock's 'Existence and Attributes', but was not as well acquainted with the Puritans as he is now.

Don was given the opportunity to teach courses in Grace Community Church's evening 'Logos' programme, where he was allowed to teach Reformed theology historically but not theologically. In other words he could say that this is what the Puritans believed, but not that this was what the Bible taught when

it differed with the church's own doctrinal statement.

In 1986, he and his wife Kim went to Pennsylvania to accept another coaching position at Geneva College in Beaver Falls, PA, the college operated by the Reformed Presbyterians (Covenanters). He began to do regular preaching as pulpit supply, which led to his being called in 1989 by his present church, the Pioneer Presbyterian Church (PCA) of Ligonier, PA.

The previous year, he had read a book by Richard Steele entitled '*A Remedy for Wandering Thoughts in the Worship of God*', first published in 1669. Finding little interest in the book from other publishers, although it was published by Sprinkle Publications, he decided to begin reprinting his own books. He received very modest financial backing from a local bank which enabled him to launch *Soli Deo Gloria* with one book, Jeremiah Burroughs' sermons on the Beatitudes, *The Saints' Happiness*.

Since then in the space of four years, nearly 60 titles have been published, including the massive four volume set of Richard Baxter's *Practical Works* (each volume weighs 2kg!), the five volume set of William Bridge, and three volume sets by John Howe and Thomas Shepard. Five additional hardback volumes by Jeremiah Burroughs have appeared. The print is large with generous margins which make for uncrowded pages. The books are a joy to handle. These works have been mildly edited without tampering with the sense in any way. Old spelling has in some instances been modernised. Don's favourite Puritan book is *Gospel Worship* by Jeremiah Burroughs, 402 pages.

Of the titles my favourite is Ralph Robinson's *Christ All and in All*, nearly 627 pages of careful exegesis, rich

Puritan reprints

The Banner of Truth was initiated as a publishing house during 1957. Since then complete sets of Puritan writers have been published: John Owen (16 vols), plus Owen on Hebrews (7 vols), Thomas Brooks (6 vols), Richard Sibbes (7 vols), John Flavel (6 vols), David Clarkson (3 vols), George Swinnock (5 vols), John Bunyan (3 large vols), Jonathan Edwards (2 large vols).

Soli Deo Gloria has published William Bridge (5 vols), John Howe (3 vols), Thomas Shepard (3 vols) and Richard Baxter's Practical Works (4 massive vols).

exposition, and searching application. Ralph Robinson (1614-1655) once said to an intimate friend that he loved fasting and prayer with all his heart. Two further significant titles are by Robert Bolton (1572-1631), *A Treatise on Comforting Afflicted Consciences*, and *Directions for a Comfortable Walking with God*. All these volumes are handsomely and substantially bound in hard covers.

Fred Huebner who runs the Cumberland Valley Book Services located in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, serves about ten Reformed conferences a year. I observed large supplies taken and sold at the Seaside Heights annual conference (see RT130). Fred comments that *Soli Deo Gloria* books are outstripping other publishers.

Two reasons can be suggested for this success.

Firstly, the timing of the *Soli Deo Gloria* titles is perfect. These books represent experiential Calvinism of the most practical kind, absolutely ideal to repudiate the antinomianism spawned by the Carnal Christian theory and the fraudulent and Satanic deception so widespread in America that it is possible to be a Christian without holiness. Don Kistler's personal experience might well

be the forerunner of many thousands who will be awakened spiritually out of the false religions of America – so awakened that they will loathe the deception which almost landed them in the fires of hell, and love with passion the holiness of God reflected so beautifully and effectively in these books.

Secondly, the tide of theological renewal upon which the Banner of Truth was launched is running out. A whole new generation of Christians has been born, most of whom have no idea of the value of reading. The minority who do read, read light books occasionally. The proportion that experimentally eat and digest rich material habitually, form a tiny minority. This new generation of believers has to be won over. They are there for the taking. *Soli Deo Gloria* has the flavour to attract many and make readers of them.

In conclusion we should note for our encouragement the tremendous spiritual depth to be found in the Puritan writers. As we see from the John Owen article in this issue editing and rewriting where needful is a vital factor. *Soli Deo Gloria* has shown that Puritanism as a power for practical and experiential Calvinism is vibrant and full of potential as we move toward the next millennium.

Journey to Serbia

Roger Weil

Having made two precautionary phone calls to Serbia to check if it was safe to travel there I flew to Thessalonika in Greece as I wished first of all to visit believers in Makedonia, the most southerly Republic of what was formerly Yugoslavia. Branko Traikovski has been living in the town of Bitola (90,000), for the past five years since he was forced out of his pastorate in Radoviš for daring to disagree with one of the denomination's leaders — disagreements in the Balkans are usually volcanic! Some of his earlier contacts with this town have begun to show signs of spiritual life. These are now meeting together in homes and in a very small Methodist church to which an evangelical pastor and his wife have recently been called. Branko was in England earlier this year when he purchased a laser-printer and a word-processor with which he is planning to begin some desk-top publishing in the Makedonian language.

The fierce nationalist divisions within the former territory of Yugoslavia have ensured that Makedonians will now only read literature in their own language. Even though they read and understand the Serbian language and speak it from time to time, it is now taboo for any self-respecting citizen of the new Republic of Makedonia! Once the four or five characters that are unique to this branch of the Cyrillic family of languages have been programmed into his computer he will be ready to start work.

The Orthodox Church is strongly opposed to what they regard as heretical cults: Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, Adventists, Baptists, Methodists etc. When Branko posted up some advertisements for evangelistic meetings Orthodox believers took them down; however they did not interfere with similar notices put up by Moslems and the followers of Yoga, deeming them to be less dangerous than the dreadful cultists! Makedonia is extremely poor and is not recognised by the EEC due to the Greek veto. They object to the new Republic calling itself by the same name as part of northern Greece — if they are willing to change their name to something else they can be recognised! For the time being Greece has closed its borders to all Makedonian citizens and trade, thus making a poor little country even poorer. This means that if we want to send anything to Branko by way of support it will have to be taken there by hand; there is no postal service while Makedonia remains a *de facto* part of former Yugoslavia. All in all we felt that there were grounds for optimism in the spiritual work in Bitola with positive signs of new life beginning to appear.

We headed north to Skopje, the capital, where we changed buses to go to the troubled Serbian province of Kosovo, presently the scene of further nationalist



The changing face of Yugoslavia

intrigue on the part of the Albanians who by various means are now in the majority and want to secede from Serbia to join Albania. Military rule is the order of the day here as the Serbs contend that this has been their homeland for many centuries and will always remain so. After a seven hour bus ride we arrived in Peć but not before we had been taken off the bus by the police, had our luggage searched and asked what business we had in that town. They are concerned about Western journalists seeking to support Albanian claims of human rights abuses in the territory. Having reassured them of our bona fides we were allowed to proceed and soon arrived in the home of Simo Ralević.

In spite of the war in Bosnia and Croatia, Simo's one-man literature ministry seems to grow rather than decline although some of his Christian readers in Croatia are afraid to receive anything from Serbia and have asked to be taken off his mailing list. Never have I seen his house looking more like a publisher's stockroom! Large packets and crates of books are piled high in almost every room and even right up the staircase to the second floor! Another twenty thousand books were expected from the printer later in the month but he didn't know where he was going to put them! He has many calls to take conferences, evangelistic and preaching services in other parts of Serbia and is therefore away from home quite a lot.

With so many people moving away from the politically explosive area, the life of the church is beginning to suffer and numbers have declined steadily. Simo maintains that if everyone who had been converted in his church had stayed in Peć and had not moved to other parts of the country it would now be full. There is no denying the great fruitfulness of his literature ministry which in turn is the fruit of his vigorous and edifying preaching; all his books are edited sermons. The pressure of distributing this literature which includes Bibles and New Testaments is enormous. He receives many letters and phone calls every day requesting his books and this entails many hours writing replies, packing and posting.

We suggested he recruit someone to relieve him of these chores so that he could concentrate on his pastoral and evangelistic work, but thus far he hasn't been able to find such a person. His younger son Timothy had been a great help in this respect but he is now studying away from home in the north of the country. His wife who has been a tower of strength to him is now far from well and apart from shopping cannot walk very far. Their youngest daughter is a very bright soul and, though only nine years old, delights herself in setting up a bookstall every afternoon in the street outside their house selling Daddy's books! In one afternoon nineteen passers-by accepted Albanian literature and New Testaments and this was in addition to other books she either sold or gave away. The United Nations embargo has meant that no financial support can now be sent into the country so the gifts we brought him were doubly welcome. Friends in Holland have driven all the way by car in order to help and encourage him, travelling by way of Hungary to avoid the war.

After saying farewell to Simo we travelled northward to visit his brother Čedo who pastors a small church in the city of Niš. He and his wife suffered poverty and persecution when they came to this city nine years ago to plant a church. Not only so but within the early membership those who claimed they believed brought division and evil-speaking into the tiny fellowship. Now they have gone, there have been several conversions and some baptisms. The Sunday we were there four more were baptised and at every service new people are coming and showing interest. After years of hard work, frustration and discouragements of all kinds, we were pleased to see a new spirit of unity and enthusiasm that had been lacking before. His little daughter aged eight also holds a bookstall after school in the street outside the church and has seen more success than the grown-ups with their bookstall in the town centre!

One brother told us that the sanctions are really beginning to bite. Many firms going out of business and being unable to trade abroad will probably lose their markets for good. One local factory formerly employing 30,000 people now employs only 5,000; unemployment is rife and getting worse. Refugees (400,000) are everywhere. We saw one young man in a wheelchair. He and his parents had been ordered at gunpoint to leave their home in Bosnia. They were told to put him and their belongings into their car and leave for Serbia as fast as they could. Whatever view one takes about this terrible war, one thing is certain, it is the innocent civilians who bear the brunt of the suffering and the awful deprivation, losing everything in a conflict that was none of their making. One young couple in this church have given themselves to serve the Lord and to that end they are studying at Welwyn, Hertfordshire in a school for missionaries. They hope to return to study in Serbia before seeking their place of service.

Next we travelled to the spa town of Vrnjačka Banja where a young man Dragiša Armuš and his wife Nada have been trying for twelve years to plant a church. The Communists forbade them to build on a plot of land they had been promised by a believer living elsewhere. Now the Orthodox Church, taking full advantage of the political situation, has encouraged the belief that to be truly Serbian one must also be Orthodox and has influenced the local authorities not to grant planning permission to other churches. This now appears to be the position in the town. However Dragiša and Nada are hoping to get permission to build a house for themselves and use part of it for a church and were awaiting the outcome of this application while I was with them. Many visitors come here from all over Serbia especially in the summer and spring months to take the waters.

During July they held evangelistic services in one of the conference halls and about two hundred people came every evening. Many accepted literature and left their names and addresses for further contact. The number of believers here is small and the work has been hampered by 'sheep stealing' by a group from a neighbouring town. One is conscious that Satan uses every means at his disposal to oppose the work and discourage the builders. It is reminiscent of

Nehemiah building the walls of Jerusalem. Not only did he have to contend with enemies outside the camp, but even from within there were those who compromised and hindered the work. Such men as Dragiša deserve our support and our prayers continually in their lonely struggle. Through Serbian friends living in Sweden, a lot of humanitarian aid has been sent to this town where 1,200 refugees are registered. Dragiša took me to the store where the food and clothing were being kept. It was really pathetic to see old folks who had lost home and all their worldly possessions picking over the piles of second-hand clothing to see if anything would fit them. Each person is also given a bag of flour, macaroni, sugar, milk powder and cooking oil together with a New Testament. Some temporary bedding is also available for those who have need of it. The Baptist Church is thus seen to be not simply a heretical cult but an organisation willing to help people at their point of need.

Our last visit was to the eastern part of the country near the borders of Bulgaria and Romania. Here Branko Tihojević and his family are working as pioneer missionaries in the town of Negotin; they have been here about five years. On the night we arrived there was a fair going on and he had a stall on the main street along with scores of others. He was not passively sitting by waiting for people to inspect the many books on offer but would ask people if they would like a free New Testament. Quite a number of people, particularly the young, responded. We closed down at midnight feeling it had been worthwhile to make known God's Word at an occasion when so many people from all around the province and even from other countries come to these festivities.

A few believers and enquirers gather in homes on Sunday and midweek. Outreach and literature distribution to neighbouring towns has resulted in the formation of a number of small groups which are showing increasing interest, so much so that Branko is hard put to visit them all on a regular basis. A room for meetings has been built in a nearby village but the real need is for a church building, maybe with a bookshop, in the town centre and for this they are praying. At present they are hiring a small hall on Sundays for the meetings but this is quite expensive and is a temporary measure.

Petrol rationing makes it increasingly difficult for private cars to travel any distance and this is hindering his visits to some extent. So long as the war continues the economic crisis in Serbia will deepen and life will become more and more difficult for everyone. The spiritual work although in its infancy is established in a few places. It behoves all who read these pages to pray for these brave native workers who are giving themselves unstintingly to founding churches in the 'regions beyond' where Christ is hardly either named or known in sincerity and truth.

Love and Error

by Bob Sheehan

2 John 7-11

The inter-relatedness of love and truth means that love must have a problem when faced with error. The specific difficulty addressed by John was whether Christian love, the love of a Christian to his fellow-Christian, could be extended to those who professed to be Christians yet taught error.

This was not merely a theoretical problem but a practical one. When our Lord first sent out his disciples he encouraged them to find a worthy family with which to stay in the towns to which they went. Such a family would welcome the disciples, show them hospitality and allow their home to be used as a base from which they did their evangelistic work.¹

As the gospel spread among the nations converts would open their homes to Christian teachers, welcome them, feed them, be associated with them and even allow their homes to be a meeting place for the Christians. Examples of such hospitable Christians in the New Testament include Lydia, Titius Justus, Mnason, Gaius, as well as 'the elect lady and her children'.²

Hospitality became a part of Christian life for the early church, and was expected of Christian leaders, and supported by examples from the Old Testament which emphasised its blessings.³

The question for the elect lady and Gaius was not whether they should express brotherly love to Christian teachers and visitors but whether brotherly love should be extended to those who claimed to be Christian yet taught a different view of Christ and discarded his teaching? Should brotherly love embrace error? Should teachers of error be treated as Christians?

Necessary distinctions

It is necessary to make some distinctions to avoid a mis-application of the teaching. We will think in terms of four categories and even make some sub-categories!

1. John is not telling us whether we should show brotherly love or not to *non*-Christians. As brotherly love is based on a shared experience of the truth a non-Christian cannot be loved as a Christian by a Christian. The non-Christian

needs evangelizing. Paul had no hesitation in showing what hospitality he could show to non-Christians in order to preach the gospel to them.⁴

2. In the same way a person who thinks he is a Christian but whose knowledge of the gospel is obviously deficient is not to be ostracized for ignorance. Ignorance is not the same as error. When Paul met some men in Ephesus who claimed to be disciples and who had some contact with John the Baptist he soon noted their deficiency. Enquiry revealed that they had not even heard of the Holy Spirit and knew nothing about Jesus! Paul supplied what was lacking so that they could become Christians indeed.⁵

3. Nor are the Christians to be denied brotherly love because of their doctrinal deviations. Christians have an infallible Bible but no one man's knowledge and interpretation is absolutely correct. Paul's warning to those who think they 'know it all' stands. 'If anyone thinks he knows something he does not know it yet as he ought to know' (1 Corinthians 8:2).

Brotherly love is still to be extended to those who we think are over-scrupulous and tending to legalism and those who we think are rather too confident in their Christian liberty. We are not the judges of other men's consciences in all sorts of areas and may not limit brotherly love to those who agree with us. It is an appalling thing for a Christian only to show brotherly love to those who like him are tee-total vegetarians! How unloving is the Christian who treats as 'dodos' anyone who has not got the brazen nerve to flaunt his Christian liberty in the way he does.⁶

Nor is brotherly love to be denied to the Christian who lives up to the truth that he has understood but still does not understand many things. A Christian who is ignorant of an area of truth needs patient and loving instruction. What benefits accrued not only to Apollos but to the whole church when Priscilla and Aquila invited him to their home to explain the way of God more accurately.⁷ His teaching ministry was greatly enhanced through the instruction received in a hospitable home.

Sometimes it is not ignorance but misunderstanding which misleads. Paul's initial instructions to the Corinthians to dissociate from the immoral and worldly had led to an attempt at semi-monastic withdrawal from society. He had to explain more clearly and explicitly that on that occasion he had been seeking to instruct them in church discipline rather than separation from the world.⁸ Paul did not withhold brotherly love from those who misunderstood him.

Even those under the influence of false teachers were not abandoned. The lies that had been fed to the Galatians about Paul and his gospel had to be refuted. The biblical basis for teaching had to be explained again. The foolish and dangerous implications of departing from the gospel had to be emphasised. The

responsibilities of the gospel had to be reinforced. Paul's love for those who were being deceived in Galatia was his great motivation for not abandoning them but pleading for their return to the truth.⁹ Paul would not abandon his brothers.¹⁰

4. If the unconverted need to be evangelized, seekers directed where to find and Christian brothers are to be shown Christian love in spite of their imperfect grasp of the whole truth, what about those who teach false doctrine? Against them, Paul calls down his anathemas¹¹ and John requires a withholding of approval and hospitality.

False teachers

Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs and Jews recognise the differences between themselves and Christians and do not want to be confused with them. Strangely, however, throughout the history of the Christian Church numerous people who have abandoned Christianity as taught by Christ and his apostles have wanted to be accepted as and treated as Christians.

By John's day, towards the end of the first century, there were many such deceivers (2 John 7). The Greek term has two meanings referring to vagabonds and those who weave a web of deception. Groups of false teachers wandering from town to town were aptly described by this term.

The particular heresies of these false teachers were two. Firstly, they would not confess the incarnation of Christ (2 John 7). They did not openly deny it but they did not confess it. What a man does not say is often as significant as what he does say. Opposition to the incarnation arose from a rejection of the idea that Jesus was fully man and fully God. These teachers had their own view of Jesus. This new view of Jesus (neither God, nor man) makes them the Antichrist. The word 'anti' in Greek does not mean primarily 'against' but 'in the place of'. They had substituted their view of Christ for that found in the teaching of Jesus and his apostles. Time and time again cults and sects have arisen claiming to be Christian but in fact being anti-Christian because of having their own substitute for the real Jesus.

Secondly, they went ahead and did not remain in the teaching of Christ (2 John 9). The verb 'to go ahead' is used in ancient Greek of a person leading others into battle. It refers to a person who is up front, ahead of others, progressive. What had they progressed beyond and left behind? The teaching of Christ. Parallels would suggest not the teaching about him but the teaching he gave.¹² Decades had passed since Jesus had given his teaching. This later generation had advanced beyond it into a new gospel.

Every generation has them. Teachers, preachers, professors, ecclesiastics, sects who 'do not feel able to commit themselves to the idea that Jesus was God',

who 'do not feel that the representation of Jesus in the gospel is an accurate and historical one' and who 'feel we need to take out the more primitive ideas of Jesus (he was, after all, a man of his day) and retain that of abiding worth'.

Such teachers, denying the God-man and deserting the teaching of Christ, John calls 'deceivers' and 'Antichrists'. One modern 'progressive thinker', C H Dodd, attacks John's 'fierce intolerance' which appears 'to condemn Christian theology to lasting sterility'¹³ but John has his reasons, for a 'new' Christ and a 'new' gospel would be disastrous.

The reasons for love's intolerance

Christian love cannot embrace as brothers those who teach a false Christ and a false gospel because Christians love Christ too much. An analogy may help. Let us imagine attending a meeting where a stranger stood up and claimed to be our brother. He then set out to describe our elder brother and gave a picture of his looks, habits and life-style that was totally false. The person described as our elder brother was nothing like him. The speaker had simply created a person from his own imagination and called him by the name of our relative. After the meeting the speaker meets us and wants to come home to our family home. What impudence! Would you not protest, remonstrate, defend your elder brother's name and reputation and expose the speaker as not a true brother at all? Why then should Christians be ready to receive as brothers those who slander and misrepresent Christ, false teachers, Antichrists, who deny him to be God with us, the man Christ Jesus? The family of Jesus Christ should not extend family love to Antichrists.

In any case, John rules out the false teachers who deny Christ and forsake his teaching as possible recipients of brotherly love by denying they are brothers at all (2 John 9). Throughout John's writings it is made abundantly clear that no-one can come to the Father except through his Son, that if the Father is to be honoured the Son must be honoured also, and that a denial of Jesus Christ is a denial of the Father.¹⁴ The man who will not confess Jesus as he really is cannot know God. He who is Christless is Godless. Brotherly love does not receive as brothers those outside the family.

Self-love also requires a rejection of the false teachers. There is a wrong self-love that seeks only its own interests and is not interested in others.¹⁵ However, there is a legitimate self-love, as may be seen from the command to love others as we love ourselves and from the scriptural assumption that we will seek to care for our bodies.¹⁶

Legitimate self-love seeks to protect itself from avoidable harm. False teaching is like a poison. It eats away at a Christian's spiritual health like a cancer. It cuts in on the Christian as he runs the Christian race and hinders his progress. It

lessens the approval that God can have of his faithfulness to the truth and the reward that God can give him (2 John 8). As the Christian is to live his life in the light of his appearance before the judgment seat of Christ he ought to shun everything that will bring disapproval from God. He wants at the end of his life to be able to say, 'I have kept the faith,' and not to confess he wandered off into error.¹⁸

Christian love loves Christ more than anyone else and does not ally itself with his enemies. Brotherly love is for the family only, not for those who wish the family harm. Self-love requires a separation from error so that its harmful effects are avoided.

Love's intolerance expressed

John commands the elect lady and her children to show these false teachers no signs of acceptance. The hospitality usually extended to Christian brothers and visiting preachers was not to be extended to them. They were not even to be greeted (2 John 10). John uses the simplest possible word for greeting,¹⁹ it has the force of 'hello'. John is concerned to promote complete separation from the false teachers.

The need for such radical rejection of those who detract from Christ and his teaching while claiming the name Christian is because any sign of acceptance of them as brothers would encourage them in their work and encourage their acceptance by others. It would also make the elect lady and her children supporters and promoters of evil (2 John 11). To accept those who teach lies is to involve oneself in the promotion of lies. It is fellowship with error which contracts guilt. Here is the biblical basis for the sin of guilt by active association with evil men. The Christian must not become a supporter and promoter of heretics.

The history of the Christian Church is a tragic account of continual refusal to obey John's command. On the one hand, there have been those who have misapplied the text and separated from brothers with whom they disagree over interpretations of Scripture. On the other hand, far too many in the name of love and tolerance have accepted into their homes and then their churches and pulpits men who degrade Christ and disregard his teaching. Enemies of Christ now hold prominent positions among Christians and are respected bishops, theologians, ministers and officials.

What a far cry this all is from true Christian love which 'does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth'.²⁰ The 'love' which allows opponents of Christ to lead the churches of Christ is not tolerance or broadmindedness but indifference to truth and contempt for Christ.

of growth and maturity is important. Young Christians are often muddled about doctrine, and even powerful preachers who know the Bible really well sometimes require correction. Apollos is an example. We tend to forget that the Reformers did not immediately come into the full light of truth. Luther certainly did not. To maintain that only the clear minded can be saved is in itself an undermining of justification by imputed righteousness. We are saved by faith alone and not by faith plus a clear intellect.

Great disunity has disfigured the Christian Church over the issue of recognising when error becomes heresy, and over differences of judgment as to how errorists are to be treated. An error may be a dead bone in one circle but an electrifying subject in another. The difference of degree of reaction to error varies greatly and can cause needless division. One says, Ignore it! Another, Fight it! In most cases clear exposition is enough to correct error.

All those in Christ (Eph 4:4-6) are under constraint to be gracious and gentle with all members of God's family. Galatians 6:1-4 provides a guide as to the manner in which correction is to be pursued. Don Garlington's outstanding exposition of those verses forms part of the book *Our Baptist Heritage*.

Continued from page 25

Tradition tells us that once John the apostle was in the public baths. He was told that a leader of the Gnostics was there too. He immediately got up and left, refusing to stay in the same building with a man who had so openly provoked the wrath of God. Whether the story is true or false the spirit is right. Love for the unevangelized the Christian must have. Love for the misled and misunderstanding he ought to show. But love for deceivers and Antichrists is hatred of God and fellowship with sin. Let Christians take note and be separate.

References

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| ¹ Matt 10:11-15 | ¹¹ Gal 1:6-9 |
| ² Acts 21:16; 16:15,40; 3 Jn 5:8; 2 Jn 10-11 | ¹² eg Rev 2:14,15; Jn 18:19 |
| ³ Rom 12:13; 1 Tim 3:2; 5:3-10; Tit 1:8; Heb 13:2 | ¹³ Quoted Stott <i>The Letters of John IVP</i> (1988) pp 214,215 |
| ⁴ Acts 28:30-31 | ¹⁴ Jn 14:6; 5:23; 1 Jn 2:22-23 |
| ⁵ Acts 19:1-7 cf Jn 9:35-38 | ¹⁵ 1 Cor 13:5; Jas 2:14-17 |
| ⁶ Rom 14 | ¹⁶ Matt 22:29; Eph 5:29 |
| ⁷ Acts 18:24-28 | ¹⁷ 2 Tim 2:17; Gal 5:7 |
| ⁸ 1 Cor 5:9-12 | ¹⁸ 2 Cor 5:9-10; 2 Tim 4:8 |
| ⁹ Gal 4:12-20 | ¹⁹ eg Acts 15:23;23:26; Jas 1:1 |
| ¹⁰ Gal 1:11; 3:15; 4:12; 5:13; 6:1,18 | ²⁰ 1 Cor 13:6 |

Charles Haddon Spurgeon — his impact on my life and ministry

Bernard Honeysett

Having been reared in hyper-Calvinistic circles (see Editorial), I heard nothing of the great preacher, C H Spurgeon; he was generally considered an Arminian by many of these folk. My first acquaintance with him was when, nearly sixty years ago, I purchased a volume of the twelve sermons by him entitled, 'Unto the Uttermost'. When I read them I did not appreciate them and was really quite critical. I was comparing them with J C Philpot's sermons which were staple diet for us. I was only looking for *experience*, which seemed lacking (although it was there) and I felt the language was too flowery. In my strict background the idea prevailed that we could not be *sobre* and serious without being *sombre* in speech and dress.

A well-known pastor of Crowborough in the South of England, the late Stanley Delves, may have had a similar experience. On my annual visit to preach for him, I used his study and it was evident that among his most used books many were by C H Spurgeon, although I never heard him mention Spurgeon's name in the pulpit. He told me that in his young days someone had given him one of J C Philpot's sermons and as he began to read, they pulled him all to pieces and he put the book down thinking he would read no more! Later he began to accept and appreciate them until whatever Philpot said, he agreed with. However he added that when his reading widened, J C Philpot fell into his rightful place.

Another friend George Rose also never mentioned Spurgeon in his preaching. It was not until my last visit to him, about two weeks before he died, that I mentioned C H Spurgeon to him. He responded by saying that Spurgeon was the greatest preacher of the last century. Both these brethren were widely accepted and used in the Gospel Standard churches but I believe that the influence of Spurgeon's preaching on their own ministries was never acknowledged.

At the commencement of my pastorate at 'Jireh' Gospel Standard Church in Tenterden part of the library of the late Pastor Denyer of the Gospel Standard Church in Canterbury was given me by his widow. Among them was a volume of Spurgeon's 'Evening Portions' which I began to read and appreciate. Subsequently, Mrs Denyer visited us and I read her a portion, asking if she recognised it — she did! The volume had been a gift to her and she had not meant to include it among the books given away. I at once returned it to her! Later in a remarkable way I came to acquire the 'Evening Portions' for myself and they have been my daily companion ever since.

I then began to purchase anything I could find of Spurgeon's writings. I remember the profound effect his biography by Holden Pike had on me, giving me a longing to be used by God for the conversion of sinners and to exalt a precious Christ. I believe this showed in my ministry although my hearers may not have known the source. I also began to give copies of the 'Morning and Evening Portions' to various friends and my deacons, some of whom may not have valued them. I always gave a copy to young couples I married and believe this was a means of bringing some to a more balanced understanding of the gospel.

In time I acquired most of the volumes of Spurgeon's sermons and often found them useful in sermon preparation. I found that when reading Spurgeon on a subject, there would be very little difference in flavour if one then turned to the Puritans. He was so steeped in them that he creamed off the best. I found he had done the spade work I neither had the time nor ability to do. I concur with the comment of William Jay of Bath in the preface of his 'Daily Portions' that these portions may often contain seed thoughts for other preachers.

My great love and esteem for Spurgeon made me want to visit the places of interest in his life. I visited Kelvedon and saw the house where he was born; it still stands in the main street of the village and has a plaque of commemoration. I have twice visited Stambourne where his grandfather ministered and where he spent a good deal of his childhood. The first time, nearly thirty years ago, I found his Aunt Ann's grave. The yew arbour (a shady retreat surrounded by trees) to which Richard Knill took the young boy to talk with him and marvel at his knowledge was still there. I also saw the grass walk behind the arbour where grandad prepared his sermons. A new chapel had been built but I believe the original pulpit remained. On this occasion a member of my congregation, a staunch Gospel Standard man, took me at my request. He was not at all interested and spent most of his time sitting in his car.

Some ten years later I visited again with my wife and was saddened to find that the arbour and grandad's walk had gone and a large part of the manse garden had been sold for building plots. It happened to be cowslip time. Spurgeon recalled how, as a boy, he used to accompany his grandfather on weekly visits for tea with the vicar and that the cowslips grew alongside the road. It came home to me with sweetness and thankfulness that although so much had gone over the years, still God's creation continued and his gracious care is evidenced in causing cowslips to grow and flower year by year to gladden our hearts and remind us of his faithfulness. I have often given thanks that God's covenant with the earth is unconditional.

Next there was Isleham and the River Lark where the youth was baptised. A friend took me to the historic and wonderful spot, a visit I will never forget. I remembered the fears young Spurgeon experienced as he was immersed in the flood, according to the command of his Lord and Master, although to the

consternation of his parents and grandad. I also enjoyed thinking of his later comments that the fishes must have eaten those fears, for they had never troubled him since!

A visit to Waterbeach sadly revealed little of interest, only a more modern Baptist chapel claiming some connection.

There remained one more site, the place where his precious remains await the resurrection morn. At my request, my eldest son took me to the Norwood cemetery on 31st January, 1992, exactly one hundred years after Spurgeon's death. As we stood together I read aloud the address given by Archbishop Brown on that occasion. It was a time of deep reflection and earnest prayer that God would again work in mighty revival power as he did in Spurgeon's day.

It was also interesting to see the Olney family grave. Pastor Stanley Delves, referred to above, recalled a visit of Mr Olney jr. after an illness. Mr Delves asked him what was so remarkable about Spurgeon's preaching. His reply was: 'I cannot tell you, but once you have heard him, you never forget it.' That day we took the same route as the cortège had taken as we drove back to the Metropolitan Tabernacle.

I had an aunt who actually heard Mr Spurgeon. She related her experience to me. Her father, who owned a baker's shop overlooking the common, was the deacon of the Gospel Standard church in Clapham. This church had in fact been built with Spurgeon's help. The original builder was not able to continue and on hearing of this Mr Spurgeon procured a builder to complete the work.

My aunt's father used sometimes to attend midweek meetings to hear Spurgeon at the Metropolitan Tabernacle. When she was about six, he asked her if she would like to accompany him. She did, and never forgot the effect on her. She said it was a very wet evening. Spurgeon baptised six men during the service. The first thing he said when he came to the rostrum was, 'Friends, you may wonder why the weather should be so inclement on such an occasion as this. It may well be that the inclemency of the weather has driven some in here tonight, who would otherwise not have been here. Let us pray that God will meet with them and save them.' Oh, that we might see the same agonising prayer for the lost in our day.

There is no doubt that Spurgeon's prayers were as effectual as his preaching. I have two volumes of his prayers and even as you read they lift you up into the heavenlies and fill your soul with joy, praise and adoration, opening something of the glories that we shall yet see in the face of our dear Redeemer.

No man is perfect, and Spurgeon would be the first to acknowledge that, but I doubt if there has ever been anyone quite like him. He was not only an evangelist par excellence, but a pastor who held together one of the largest of

congregations for nearly forty years. Even with great preachers, it is uncommon that their sermons could be read with the same powerful effect as when they were heard, but this seems to have been the case with Spurgeon. I often feel moved in my spirit as I read alone or to others. At the end of his sermon on 'The Marriage Feast' which I remember once reading to an elderly lady, Spurgeon uses every means possible to move his hearers – warning, pleading, persuading, cajoling, threatening and wooing.

Towards the end of his life, on one of my visits to the late J H Gosden, editor of the Gospel Standard, I spoke affectionately of C H Spurgeon but I was saddened by the tone of his comments and criticism of minor features.

Twice, while I was pastor at Jireh, Tenterden, I read one of his morning portions in our service. The first was on November fifth which fell on a Sunday that year. The text was, 'No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper.' It was a wonderful reminder of God's goodness to us nationally on that occasion and that was acceptable. The other time was the thirty first of December, his closing portion from, 'The harvest is past, the summer is ended and we are not saved.' Spurgeon pleads with sinners and asks, after pointing out all their privileges and the time which is fast passing, *Will you ever be saved? Is there any likelihood of it?* This was too much for some, and one person came into my vestry to complain. Obviously to them it was near implying 'creature power' and freewill!

Often it is people who have never read Spurgeon that are critical of him. By isolated examples a false impression may be created. The more one reads, the more one appreciates him. The late Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones once challenged the ministers at the Westminster Fellowship, 'If you think you have had a good day preaching, go home and read one of Spurgeon's sermons and that will put you into your right place.'

A friend who worked for many years in the Law Courts told me that years ago, when a reporter was asked where he learnt his shorthand, the reply often came, 'In the top gallery.' The fact was that many would go to the Metropolitan Tabernacle, sit in the top gallery and take down the sermon which was apparently ideal for this purpose. As I have sat in the Tabernacle, I have wondered how many came with that intention, were convicted and saved under Spurgeon's preaching – the Great Day will declare it.

I believe that the secret of Spurgeon's success was his prayer life and his deep communion with the Lord. I remember reading that he was once walking with a friend along a path where they found a tree had fallen across it. Spurgeon immediately fell on his knees beside it and prayed. I am persuaded that if we are to see blessing and revival, we must get on our knees.

Not long before his death, Spurgeon stayed for a few days in Eastbourne to see if he could stand the journey to Mentone. He asked a visiting friend to what

The International Baptist Conference

'The Unique Christ' was the theme of the Sixth IBC, Toronto. Again Jarvis Street proved the ideal venue for a well attended conference offering a wonderful opportunity to meet Christians from near and far.

The theme was comprehensively covered as represented by 16 papers in the A4 size folio obtainable for 20 Canadian dollars including postage from Jarvis Street Baptist Church, 130 Gerrard Street East, Toronto, Ontario, M5A 3T4, Canada. The preaching of Conrad Mbewe of Zambia was stirring and enriching. It was encouraging to have excellent ministry from Thierry Huser of Nimes, France, and Noel Espinosa of

the Philippines. Peter Parkinson's paper stood out for its practical application and Don Garlington's exposition on the temptation of Christ was outstanding. John Campbell's paper is valuable for the thorough way it sets out different Christologies. For instance just how far away James Dunn is is made clear. Singling out a few papers like this is not to disparage the others which reflect a great volume of research.

At every IBC there has been a warm sense of welcome and hospitality. Those who have worked very hard to make the conferences a success are warmly thanked.

CHARLES HADDON SPURGEON — *Continued from page 30*

church he belonged. On hearing the response, the Strict Baptist, Spurgeon replied, 'Stick to them, they have the truth.' He was then a sad man for many in his own connection were forsaking the truth and so parting company with him.

More has been written about Charles Haddon Spurgeon than perhaps any other preacher in this country. This short account is a personal testimony of how much this dear servant of God has meant to me as an example over many years. I believe that under God we may have a hero, but not an idol! I am also thankful that God blesses many ministries if they are faithful and does not have to raise up great men. I also rejoice in the fact that I believe there are many more men preaching the true gospel today (1992) than there were forty years ago, and with Spurgeon I look for a great blessing and reviving. God grant it, for there is no other solution to our national condition.

Report of IFRB Meeting

Four continents were represented at a meeting of members of the International Fellowship of Reformed Baptists in Toronto, Canada on 23rd October 1992. There was encouragement at the positive response to IFRB since its inception and area representatives reported on the situation in their regions.

The purposes of IFRB were:

1. To promote and strengthen unity among Reformed Baptists.
2. To provide a meaningful identity to isolated Reformed Baptists and encourage inter-church communication and fellowship.
3. To discourage sectarianism, authoritarian abuse and needless division.
4. To encourage church planting and missionary endeavour.
5. To promote distinctive Reformed Baptist literature.

There was discussion of forthcoming publications, including 'A Marvellous Ministry — How the all-round ministry of Charles Haddon Spurgeon speaks to us today', and 'Our Baptist Heritage'. David Kingdon's plans of a book to follow in the steps of 'Children of Abraham' were explained.

Reports were received from Tom Wells on his visit to churches in Jamaica; from Erroll Hulse on his visit to Cameroon; and from Stuart Latimer requesting assistance for Pastor Andrew Coats on St Helena Island in the South Atlantic Ocean. (We are glad to report that the need has been supplied in the person of a retired missionary from South Africa who, with his wife, is now ministering in the Baptist church on St Helena while Pastor and Mrs Coats are on furlough.)

Walt Chantry, Erroll Hulse and Tom Wells were asked to work together on the doctrinal basis of IFRB, that its Confessional clarity may be strengthened, at the same time allowing for flexibility within comprehensive doctrinal integrity.

The area representatives of IFRB were confirmed for a further term of service and a General Committee was appointed for 1993: Geoffrey Thomas, Peter Parkinson, Bruce Ray, Stuart Latimer and Andrew Spreadbury.

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CONTENTS

- 1 Editorial**
- 3 Don Carson's call for Spiritual Reformation** — *a review article*
- 5 The Portrait of a True Pastor** John Owen
- 13 The Story of Soli Deo Gloria** Editor
- 16 Journey into Serbia** Roger Weil
- 21 Love and Error** Bob Sheehan
- 27 Charles Haddon Spurgeon** — *his impact on my life* Bernard Honeysett
- 31 The International Baptist Conference**
- 32 Report of IFRB Meeting**