

---

# REFORMATION TODAY

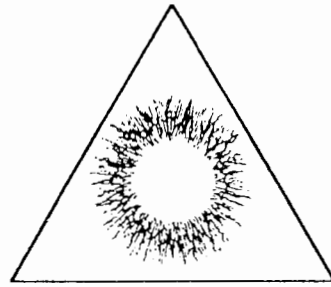


MARCH-APRIL 1993

132

---

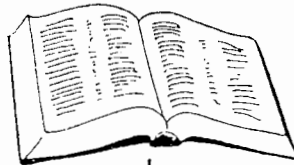
Adapted for Baptists from  
Abraham Kuyper's diagram  
in *De Heraut* Dec 6, 1885



The eternal, infinite  
holy God of love –  
Three in One

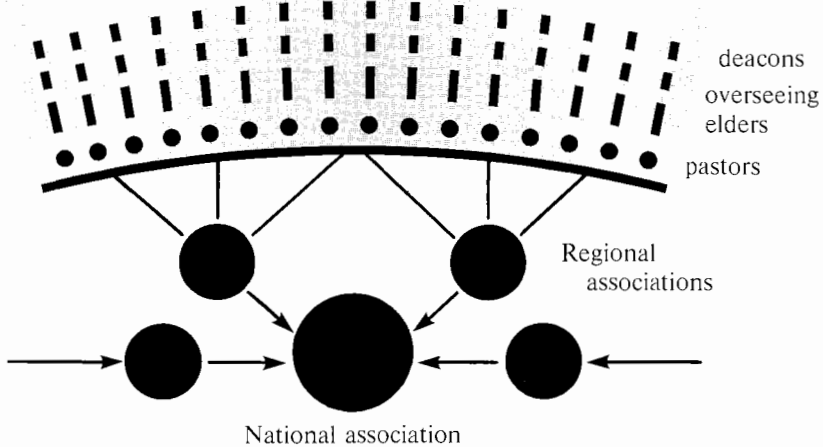


Jesus Christ  
kingly shepherd  
united to every  
member of his  
body, the Church



Christ shepherds  
his flock through  
his Word  
Ephesians 4:7-16

The believing churches  
Eph 4:4-6



See article **Church Government** – checks and balances

---

# Editorial

---

Three vital themes are expounded in this issue:

1. *The neglected question of inter-church order.* The unity of the Church is precious to our Lord.
2. *Miracles Today – are they true or counterfeit?*
3. *Should we immerse believers when we baptise?* Objections are carefully considered by pastor Tom Wells of Cincinnati in the first of three articles. As often stressed before in these pages we have a great deal in common with those who do not share our Baptist convictions. We wish to maximise that unity. There are those who argue that the mode of baptism is not important. However the mode illustrates the momentous nature of union with Christ. Romans chapter six will be considered in the second article.

*Miracles Today* – This subject is introduced by the report of a meeting in Leeds of the Christian Medical Fellowship addressed by Dr Peter May. He politely challenges the claims of present day ‘miracle workers’. Dr May has examined the best claims that can be provided by Morris Cerullo, Reinhard Bonnke and John Wimber. He and his medical colleagues cannot find verification of anything that can be described as miraculous.

In this connection we call to mind B B Warfield’s book *Counterfeit Miracles*, a work often dismissed because of that author’s contention for the cessation of the extraordinary charismata. However it is important to come to grips with Warfield’s historical thesis. For that reason a synopsis of this famous book is included. If Christlike miracles were meant to continue then why are we still waiting after nearly 2,000 years?

---

Cover picture: *Adina has recently returned to Romania following a 3 month stay in the UK for medical treatment. Adina spent the first year of her life in Romanian child care institutions and through a series of injections lost the ability to bend her knees. Adina now lives with her brother, Paul, and 10 other children at Casa Bucuriei in Paulis, a Christian children’s home run by Caring For Life International. Apart from the lifelong care offered her there, Adina’s prospects as a disabled person in Romania looked bleak. However, through the kindness of a Christian orthopaedic consultant in Doncaster, an operation has been successfully performed and Adina is on the road to gaining almost full mobility. Adina, her brother Paul and Crina, another little girl from Casa Bucuriei who came at the same time for plastic surgery, will be most sorely missed by their young friends at Leeds Reformed Baptist Church. We should pray for the ongoing work of CFLI: for the 12 children at Casa Bucuriei and the 13 children now living at the 2 newly opened homes at Casa Noastra in Arad.*

---

## Church Government – checks and balances

---

The subject of church order was handled in a series of articles on the eldership in *Reformation Today* during the late 1970s.[1]

It is possible to think that if one solves the government of the local church that the matter of church order is tidied up. The most recent book on the eldership is a fine work by Clifford Pond (*Only Servants*, Grace Publications, 172 pages, 1991). He covers almost every aspect of the subject but only as it relates to one independent church. If there is no inter-church order the discipline of an immoral member can be rendered meaningless.

We need to move forward and work on the subject of church unity and inter-church relationships. The Church of Christ on earth is essentially One. There may be many microcosms in the form of churches which have independent church order, but how do the churches relate to each other? When our Lord prayed for the unity of his Church it was not for the unity of thousands of fragments all at loggerheads with each other. It was for the unity of his One universal Church that he prayed. The Oneness of the Church of Christ is the central foundational principle which should undergird all church government. The apostolic Church was, and felt itself to be, One.

During the late 1970s and following there was a considerable movement toward eldership rule in Reformed Baptist churches, a movement away from the old form of a single pastor assisted by deacons.

From general observation I would judge that in about two out of three cases where the system of eldership was implemented it has proved to be a boon and have tremendous advantages. Eldership is a system easy to uphold from Scripture. It is not confined to any one denomination. The Christian Brethren practise it as do Baptists and Pentecostals. Presbyterians derive their name from it. In perhaps one out of three instances where eldership has been implemented in RB churches failure has ensued, moderate failure, but in some cases abysmal failure.

There are various reasons for this. The most obvious reason is that any system of leadership will only function well if spiritual men, truly gifted and called by the Lord, occupy the positions of responsibility. To insist on a plurality of elders

simply out of an idealistic notion is a recipe for disaster. It is preferable by far to have a single gifted spiritual pastor assisted by deacons than artificially create an eldership for doctrinaire reasons. The same applies to deacons. Better to confine deacons to a small number who really function than have a number who do not.

But even in the case of truly excellent elders there have been serious difficulties, if not calamities. One of these is because of the insistence that all elders are equal. They may be equal when in session but they are very rarely equal in gifts and function. 1 Timothy 5:17 'especially those whose work is preaching and teaching', shows that there is diversity of function among the elders. Also the call to full-time vocation sets pastors in a position of special responsibility with commensurate authority. The role of a godly full-time minister is universally recognised by the general public. A further consideration is the common sense factor of leadership. Only one man can take the helm of a ship.

There are a few examples of several fulltime pastors working together in harmony. They are able fully to use a diversity of gifts in specialised areas. Well knit connectional bodies facilitate the recognition of gifts and the suitable placing of pastors. Independent churches mostly lack this facility.

A further reason for eldership breakdown is the lack of inter-dependency, the lack of a court of appeal when there are divisions. Innumerable divisions could have been averted by recourse to a tribunal. The number of divisions that have taken place in independency in Britain is scandalous, injurious and obscene. In connectional systems of church government countless divisions have been avoided. The greatest defect of many in the strictly independent system is the fact that a church all on its own can be taken over by a rich man, an eccentric, a nepotist, an egocentric like Diotrephes (3 Jn 9), or even a tyrant. John Owen warned as follows, 'The church that confines its duty to the acts of its own assemblies cuts itself off from the external communion of the Church catholic; nor will it be safe for any man to commit the conduct of his soul to such a church' (Works vol 16 page 196). Not only are there dangers from within that can overwhelm an isolated church, there are hazards that come from the outside. The book of Judges describes the extermination of a town. There was no ally, and no redress (Judges 18:27,28).

There is then in independency a glaring lack of provision for a genuine court to which appeal can be made in the case of injustice done to ministers, or alternatively an adequate way in which to deal with pastors who become heretical or immoral. Presbyterianism, while having all the machinery for the latter, sometimes fails for the simple reason that the machinery is so ponderous that nobody can get it to move. The lack of a court of appeal, (which falls far

short of the provisions made by civil government), has caused many pastors in independency to enter connectional denominations where they find tenure (security), and thus avoid being the victims of fickle churches or fickle church officers.

### **Reasons for inter-church government**

A few dismiss this subject in a cynical way as beyond solution. In the same way politics can be dismissed, or philosophy – ‘A philosopher is a blind man, in a dark room, looking for a black cat, that is not there.’ Independents who are hostile to connectionalism have their reasons.

David Kingdon (*RT 103*) outlines four reasons why independency is favoured today, 1. *Voluntaryism*. We can belong freely to any kind of organisation so why bother with inter-church unity? 2. *Individualism*. A liking to do our will without consulting the interests of other churches. 3. *Denominationalism*. Look at the disarray of the doctrinally compromised denominations and look at the number of denominations that have apostatised! So we withdraw into isolationism. It has been pointed out that most pastors seceding from the liberal Baptist Union have not survived in the ministry for the simple reason that there has been no cohesive support to assist them in their isolation. 4. *Reaction*. We react against what is wrong but fail to build up something better. When denominations go into decline the leaders often become corrupt. Faithful churches then have to make new alliances and seek revival and reformation in unity with like-minded faithful assemblies. To the above reasons I would add a fifth. 5. *Erastianism*. The new presbyter in Puritan times was the old priest writ large. Most clerics of the 17th century were Erastian in their thinking. However American Presbyterianism abandoned Erastianism and insisted on complete separation of Church and State. Baptists were the first to emphasise this distinction and have consistently held to it.

In answer to the cynics I suggest that the Reformed view of Scripture is that it is all sufficient. There are principles to guide us for church government not only at the local level but at the inter-church level. For instance we read of a dispute that originated in Antioch. That matter was not settled in Antioch. It was referred to a central external assembly. That assembly pronounced a verdict. Churches everywhere submitted to that verdict (Acts 15). Every great stride forward in Church history has been brought about through unity, whether the early Councils, the Westminster Assembly, or the pastors meeting to formulate the 1677 (1689) Confession, or pastors gathering in regional association to support William Carey in the missionary vision.

The history of the Church reveals a constant disposition to inter-church unity. During the first three centuries this was expressed in episcopacy (bishops).

There are better systems but that was the one provided to unify, preserve and save the Church during most perilous times.

Since the Sixteenth Century Reformation we have accrued an extensive record of connectionalism: Lutheran, Episcopal, Presbyterian, Baptist. A survey has been made for America with the following results: The Presbyterians, after 284 years, have divided into a present total of 7 denominations. The Reformed (Dutch and German) after 360 years into a total of 5 denominations. The Methodists, after 205 years, have divided into 11 denominational groups. The Baptists, after 350 years, have divided into 14 different denominations. The Pentecostals after 103 years have split into 24 denominations. (Presbyterian Magazine [in England] Sept 1989. This magazine ceased in 1991). Much more information is needed in order to evaluate the above claims. Nevertheless they are instructive.

If one had the time it would be possible to examine at least fifty evangelical Baptist Union denominations in different nations and assess the merits and demerits of the church order employed in each case. The first to be examined would be the Southern Baptist Convention (dubbed as the largest Presbyterian denomination in the world!). With about 20,000 churches in North America the SBC has the largest evangelical Convention (Synod?) in the world, the biggest budget, and the largest missionary army in the world, all because they opt for unity. That is the positive side. The SBC has formidable problems. Likewise one could examine fifty Presbyterian denominations in various countries.

The key to harmonious order lies in the checks and balances, within each local church, and between the local churches and the regional association and national association.

#### 1. Checks and balances    **The membership and the elders**

Elders have authority to lead and to rule (Heb 13:17). The membership does not take the lead or rule. Yet the membership needs to be led in such a way that they zealously support and endorse that leadership. A church cannot be led or governed without consensus. That may from time to time be difficult. The average church is likely to have some young in the faith and untaught, others weak, others unruly, and yet others malcontented (1 Thess 5:14). The members support the work financially. They will not do that if they are not convinced of the enterprise of the leadership.

#### 2. Checks and balances    **The membership and the deacons**

If the deacons are worthy of their office they will be given the freedom to act within their brief. They may be involved in works of mercy or programs of refurbishment or extension. These may be urgent and worthy but nevertheless the membership acts as a check, not to stifle initiative but to draw lines as to how

far expenditure should go. The membership will need to endorse the broad outline of enterprise.

### 3. Checks and balances **The elders and the pastor**

I have already pointed to the fact that full-time pastors are not the same as overseeing elders. In Presbyterianism this reality tends often to be overstressed. The result is that most Presbyterian denominations experience acute difficulty in getting their overseeing elders to function realistically. Everything tends to be left to the professional. In this way gifts are left unused. Overseeing elders need to be fully involved and not just be there to rubber stamp the full-time pastor or pastors.

### 4. Checks and balances **The local church and the regional and national associations**

Depending on the size of a nation there will be regional associations and a national association. Even the FIEC (The Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches) in England is finding it necessary to follow that pattern.

A fine example of the function of regional associations and a national association is that which occurs in the history of the Protestant Church in France. Within about eight years the number of Calvinistic churches in France grew from one in 1555 to 2,150 in 1562. (see Westminster Conference report). That denomination used a Presbyterian system of church order for the next hundred years. Regional associations handled matters only pertaining to matters regional. A National synod met 29 times within that hundred year period exclusively to handle issues of national concern. In this way the unity of the Church overall was maintained. Persecution eventually destroyed that movement. About 200,000 were martyred and 700,000 were forced to emigrate.

All matters of common interest as they affect churches in a county or region are the business of the regional association. Here David Kingdon's significant article, *Independency and Inter-dependency*, is illuminating (see RT 103). He describes the organisation of the first Reformed Baptists. Church officers who attend the regional association will take with them the interests of their church as those interests affect the other churches. Matters which cannot be settled locally can be referred to the regional association. Sometimes there are issues, especially to do with discipline, which can overwhelm a local church and baffle its leadership. The united wisdom of several leaders drawn from sister churches can provide wisdom and counsel of immense comfort. Naturally the directive given requires the acquiescence of those in the local church who have the responsibility of applying it. If a situation is crushing leaders from the association can be called in to assist. That is not possible in a church which is



isolated because that church will not be accustomed to inter-church relationships.

#### 5. Checks and balances **Representatives from all the churches at a national assembly**

The churches should be inter-related and united in just as meaningful and significant a way as believers are themselves joined to each other. The national association or assembly should represent those interests of all the churches together, especially for church planting, missionary endeavor abroad, training for the ministry and ministerial accreditation. Those matters too great for regional associations can be taken to the national assembly by way of appeal. If leaders in one region have not been able to reach a satisfactory conclusion then leaders drawn from a broader spectrum might do its justice. In this way the resources of the Church as the repository of Christ's gifts are used.

#### **Objections**

The foremost objection to connectionalism is that it can lead to the abuse of power. For that reason it is dangerous. But we could argue that several sublime provisions of God are dangerous. Marriage is dangerous. Civil government is dangerous. But we dare not do without it. As the checks and balances are kept so the unity of the Church is maintained. To circumvent personal power some denominations elect a new chairman annually. That is not ideal since a gifted leader may need time to promote reformation. So long as a leader is doing well he should be allowed to continue. However the position of chairman or moderator should be subject to review and the democratic process employed for election.

The main purpose of regional associations and a national assembly is to implement the great commission. The danger of wasting time with trivia should be strongly resisted. Associational meetings should be convened only as there is a genuine need, often enough to maintain genuine unity, and to deal with urgent issues, but not more than that.

#### **The authority of a national association**

What provision is made for inter-church unity and for inter-dependency in our 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith? Chapter 26 paragraph 15 on the Church reads:

*When difficulties or differences occur in respect of doctrine or church government, and peace, unity and edification are at risk, one church only may be involved or the churches in general may be concerned. Again, a member or members of a church may be injured by disciplinary proceedings not agreeable to truth and church order. In such cases as these it is according to the mind of*

*Christ that many churches in fellowship together should meet and confer together through their chosen representatives, who are able to give their advice on the matters in dispute to all the churches concerned. It must be understood, however, that the representatives assembled are not entrusted with any church power properly so called, nor have they any jurisdiction over the churches themselves to exercise discipline upon any churches or persons, or to impose their conclusions on the churches or their officers. Acts 15:2,4,6,22,23,25; 2 Cor.1:24; 1 John 4:1.*

The crucial issue is that which concerns church power. If there is no authority how can there be discipline? Paragraph three on the Church speaks of churches becoming 'synagogues of Satan'. That infers that heresies or immoralities can invade churches. If there is no way to redress scandalous situations on the basis that each independent church is impervious to correction it makes nonsense of Church order. In actual fact the Associational way of connectionalism adopted by the Particular Baptists does allow for effective discipline of an erring church. Unless the offending church repents and puts its house in order it is excluded from the Association. That is an exercise of power. It is effective. However RB associations may wish to clarify and reword 26:15 so that biblical authority is guaranteed when necessary.

Our Lord set the unity of his Church on the same level as his own glory, the holiness of that body, and her protection in the fulfilment of her mission. The kind of unity he prayed for was a visible unity, a genuine unity which would convince the watching world and act as a means for the conversion of that watching world (Jn 17:20-23). The kind of unity he prayed for was a unity in the truth and love, the same kind of unity of holiness and love that always characterises the three Persons of the Trinity. The Church is essentially One in spirit and in practice whether viewed as individuals or as assemblies (Eph 4:1-6).

[1]	The Eldership and Continuity of Teaching	RT34 1976
	Reformation of the Eldership	RT35 1977
	How to Recognise and Ordain an Elder	RT37 1977
	The Qualifications for Elders, Deacons and Women Workers	RT39 1977
	The Authority of Elders	RT44 1978
	The Call to Eldership Illustrated from the life of John Calvin	RT53 1980
	Eldership in the Old Testament	RT59 1981
	Reformation for Elders and Deacons	RT60 1981
	A Man whose Children 'Believe'?	RT63 1981
	When the Eldership Breaks Down	RT69 1982
	What Baptist History Teaches us about Eldership	RT69 1982
	Elders	RT72 1983

---

## **Christlike Miracles or Wonderful Healing?**

---

*On the November 27, 1992, about forty doctors and specialists came together in Leeds at a meeting organised by the Christian Medical Fellowship. The speaker was Dr Peter May, a GP from Southampton and a member of the Church of England Synod.*

Dr Peter May has been interested in the subject of healing miracles for about 20 years. More recently he has become well known because of his challenge of Morris Cerullo's extravagant claims to be a miraculous healer. Dr May is not aggressive in his approach. He is a dedicated believer and does not doubt that there can be, and occasionally are, remarkable healings. However his investigations, supported by the medical fraternity, demonstrate that there is no medical evidence to support the fantastic claims made by so-called miracle workers.

Dr May stressed that it is important to define what we understand by miracle. This is not easy since the word 'miracle' does not occur in the Bible in the original languages. (There are signs, wonders and powers — see Hebrews 2:4). The healings of Jesus were miraculous inasmuch as they were instantaneous, complete healings of incurable disease.

He can find no evidence for that kind of Christlike creative power today. Dr May explained that it is his policy to ask those who make fabulous claims to cure people to choose their very best example and submit the medical evidence. It is with the greatest difficulty and with many prevarications that he eventually received examples from Morris Cerullo. On examination there was nothing whatever to substantiate these claims. The best example was of a woman who claimed to be free from her former back pains but clinically the evidence shows no improvement in her actual physical condition.

When it came to question time it became clear that there was a general agreement among most present that the Lord often answers prayers for healing by using natural means or simply by working better health in the sufferer which always takes time. Those cases which appear to be instant can be explained and mostly belong to the realm of the psychosomatic. This is not to be cynical but simply realistic.

Dr Peter Cox stressed the need to be truthful. We should tell the truth about those who are not healed. We dishonour God with exaggeration. He also stressed the importance of having a theology of suffering.

## **Reformation Today Trust**

As from 1993 *Reformation Today* is registered as a Charity Trust. This move was considered prudent by Leeds Reformed Baptist Church for several reasons but mostly because increasing involvement with Third World countries requires that *RT* have its own charity status for the receiving of covenant gifts to fund literature work into these countries.

There were a few present who advocated an emphasis on prayer for the miraculous healing of the sick, for believers and in secular situations.

Dr Rosemary Eccles drew attention to the needs of men's souls rather than their physical needs. The grace of the gospel was demonstrated most powerfully in the lives of Christians who, in their suffering, showed the reality of God's peace and strength and the certainty of an eternal hope. Our prayers for non-Christians should be for the salvation of souls to eternal life and our attention should not be diverted from the great commission.

A pastor present commended Dr May for his courage, pointing out that the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is brought into disrepute when the public observe the fraudulent nature of the claims that are made, and furthermore a trail of disillusionment is left behind in a great many who come to be healed and are disappointed. The recent expulsion of Morris Cerullo from India came about as a direct result of the people observing that he was simply unable to do what he claimed to do.

We are indebted to Dr May for his call for evidence and for the way in which true Christians are able to identify with his reasonable observations and so distance themselves in the eyes of the public from fanaticism.

During the meeting Dr May said that correspondence was available with regard to the claims of Jennifer Rees Lacombe whose best selling book is published by 'Hodder & Stoughton' and whose story is shown on an 'International Films' video which was recently screened on BBC1. Both book and video make extravagant claims which are not borne out by her case notes. There is an obvious need and responsibility for publishers to verify the medical accuracy of the stories they tell.

The overall impression is that under careful and sympathetic investigation the claims of the miracle workers shrink and shrivel to very little, instances of healing, perhaps, and maybe in a very small number of cases, yes, but nothing even remotely approaching the Christlike works of instant creative power worked by our Lord.

---

# What did Warfield really say?

---

## Counterfeit Miracles by B B Warfield

*First published by Scribners 1918, Eerdmans edition 1954, Banner of Truth edition 1972.*

During 1917 and 1918 Benjamin Breckenridge Warfield delivered a series of lectures on *Miracles: Yesterday and Today, Real and Counterfeit* at the Columbia Theological Seminary. The subtitle, used on the cover of the Eerdmans edition is, *A Protestant View of the Cessation of the Charismata and Modern-day Claims to Miraculous Powers.*

Warfield (1851-1921) trained for the ministry at Princeton Theological Seminary and the University of Leipzig (1876-7) and thereafter spent his life as a professor of theology, first at Western Theological Seminary, Pittsburg, and then at Princeton where he succeeded A A Hodge. Warfield was an eminently lucid biblical expositor and an astute theologian. His collected works consist of ten large volumes. Among his best known works are *The Inspiration of Scripture* and the above named title. Warfield is rightly esteemed as the foremost Reformed theologian in defence of biblical Christianity in the face of liberalism over the last hundred years. He met the Liberals square on and answered them politely and thoroughly. Warfield maintained a blameless life and adorned the gospel with personal holiness.

Today it is widely deemed incredible that the charismata of the New Testament should cease. By that is meant the cessation of the nine supernatural gifts described in 1 Corinthians 12:4-11. B B Warfield is famous for his view of cessation and hence the expression – ‘The Warfield Position’. I frequently find Warfield dismissed almost with contempt, and in every case have the impression that such dismissals are based simply on hearsay. Next time you hear Warfield dismissed challenge the spokesman to provide a coherent summary of Warfield’s position.

Warfield’s thesis is well reasoned and powerfully documented (94 pages of notes in small type referring to and quoting from source materials). It is even more relevant now than the time he prepared it. It is a readable, fascinating book full of interest. He begins as follows:

When our Lord came down to earth he drew heaven with him. The signs which accompanied his ministry were but trailing clouds of glory which he brought from heaven, which was his home.

He declares that the Apostolic Church was characteristically a miracle-working Church. The miracles, he suggests 'were part of the credentials of the apostles' (2 Cor 12:12; Heb 2:4).

A popular slogan of our day is that it is impossible to prove from the Bible that miracles were intended to cease. Douglas Judisch comes to grips with the biblical case for cessation in his book *An Evaluation of the Claims to the Charismatic Gifts*. (95 pp Baker 1978). Warfield's purpose is to examine the history of miracles. What has occurred in subsequent centuries? If God intended the miracles to continue then where is the evidence for them? He suggests, 'There is little or no evidence at all for miracle-working during the first 50 years of the post-Apostolic church; it is slight and unimportant for the next 50 years.' He then goes on to point out that claims for miracles multiply as the centuries follow and in the book proper documents that these claims come within the fog of syncretism, superstition mixed with Christian ideas, during the next century (the third); and become abundant and precise only in the fourth century, to increase still further in the fifth and beyond. Thus, if the evidence is worth anything at all, instead of a steady decrease, there was a steady increase of miracle-working. We learn that:

The writings of the so-called Apostolic Fathers contain no clear and certain allusions to miracle-working or to the exercise of the charismatic gifts, contemporaneously with themselves. . . . Their anxiety with reference to themselves seems to be lest they should be esteemed overmuch and confounded in their pretensions with the Apostles, rather than to press claims to station, dignity, or powers similar to theirs.

Theophilus of Antioch . . . when challenged by Autolykus to produce but one dead man who had been raised to life, discovers by his reply that there was none to produce; and 'no evidence of this miracle was ever produced in the first three centuries'.

Following the Introduction, chapters are arranged as follows: 1. Patristic and Medieval Marvels, 2. Roman Catholic Miracles, 3. Irvingite Gifts, 4. Faith-Healing and 5. Mind-Cure (Mrs Eddy and Christian Science). I will comment on the first four but skip Mrs Eddy and commend that readers who may be interested in Christian Science read Warfield themselves.

### **1. Patristic and Medieval Marvels**

Roman Catholic theologians boldly declare that God has been pleased in every age to work a multitude of evident miracles in his Church. Jerome, Gregory of Nyssa, Athanasius, Chrysostom, Ambrose and that great thinker Augustine all describe for us miraculous occurrences of the most incredible kind as having taken place within their knowledge.

Most important are the bones of Stephen which came to light in Jerusalem in 415. These bones were spread abroad and wherever they were taken miracles were claimed. At one shrine seventy miracles were reported in less than two years. The great problem with the teeming multitude of fantastical accounts is actually to substantiate one. It is like seeing shadows which appear to be a mighty shoal of fish, but not being able to hook one and bring it in.

In his later writing, Augustine conceded that the miracles of the New Testament are unique and in his *Retractions* he is careful to relegate to a lower league the miracles he reported earlier.

Warfield observes that throughout the Patristic and Medieval period it is difficult to discover anyone who claims to have wrought miracles. Also the character of miracles claimed is in stark contrast to the sublime wonders wrought by Jesus. For instance:

A bishop named Marsius is related to have let his portion of the Eucharistic bread, received from the hands of the administrator, fall into the folds of his robe because he did not wish to break his fast. It at once turned into a serpent and wrapped itself around his waist whence it could be dislodged only by a night of prayer for him by the administrator.

Miracle stories represent an infusion of heathen ideas into the Church; a mix of superstition, folk lore and distorted Christianity. Christian supernaturalism was thought of as magic. From the life of Francis of Assisi an example may be taken of the story of a parrot being carried away by a kite. When the parrot uttered the appeal to his master, '*sancte Thoma, adjuva me*', the creature was immediately rescued. That is one of the more pleasant miracle stories. There are some which are crude.

## 2. Roman Catholic Miracles

Warfield quotes German author Trede:

In the third century religion was steeped in belief in miracles. In their thinking and in their believing men floated in a world of miracles like fish in water. The more miraculous a story the more readily it found believing acceptance. There was no question of criticism, however timid; the credulity of even educated people reached an unheard-of measure, as well as the number of those who, as deceived or deceivers, no longer knew how to distinguish between truth and falsehood. Those of the old faith (the heathen) had no doubt of the miracles of those of the new faith (the

Christians) and *vice versa*. The whole population of the Roman Empire was caught in a gigantic net of superstition, the product of the combined work of East and West. There never was a society so enlightened and so *blasé* that lived so entirely in the world of the supernatural (pp 75-76).

Absurdity prevails in the enormous catalogue of miracles which proliferated in the ensuing centuries and has become the proud inheritance of the Roman Catholic Church. Included in these records is the story of Christians preserving feathers dropped from the wings of the angel Gabriel when he was on his mission to announce to Mary the coming birth of Jesus. A considerable segment in the treasury concerns Mary's milk. Stories are so numerous that it stretches credulity that Mary could have supplied so many centres. The use of relics supposed to be the source of miraculous power is closely related to fetishism. It is bewildering to observe the extent to which the relics multiplied.

Warfield shows that by far the most significant event in modern times was the 'apparition' of the Blessed Virgin in 1858 at Lourdes, the shrine there having superseded all others as a healing venue, visited by millions. The tiny proportion of those who receive benefit is discussed: about one cure to every 2,500 visitors. Think of the proportion of failure. The heart sinks when it contemplates the enormous mass of disappointment and despair!

### 3. Irvingite Gifts

Introducing this section, Warfield declares:

Pretensions by any class of men to the possession and use of miraculous powers as a permanent endowment are, within the limits of the Christian Church, a speciality of Roman Catholicism. Denial of these pretensions is part of the protest by virtue of which we bear the name of Protestants (p 127).

The story of Edward Irving, his views, his meteoric rise to fame in London and his subsequent decline is told by Warfield. Arnold Dallimore's *The Life of Edward Irving*, Banner of Truth 1983, is more detailed. A leading prophet in the Irvingite movement, Robert Baxter, confessed himself to have been subject to delusion. Irving himself never received a special power and not more than twelve claimed to have the endowment of supernatural utterance. Before long the Irvingite gifts were discredited. The denomination, the Catholic Apostolic Church, grew in size and wealth with a peculiar character of high church-like ornateness in décor and peculiar formal liturgy.

Irving himself (was) . . . more and more overruled and set aside by the powers he had evoked and could not control; he sank into an ever more subordinate position in the edifice he had raised (p 144).



With issue 132 *Reformation Today* completes 23 years (from 1970 to 1972 the magazine was produced as a quarterly, and thereafter as a bi-monthly – for mathematicians  $3 \times 4$  plus  $20 \times 6 = 132$ ). *Deo volente* the editor is due to be ministering in Louisiana, California and Mexico during March. He is due to travel to Pakistan with Derek Thomas of Belfast during April and early May.

The supernatural gifts that were claimed fell into disrepute and the Catholic Apostolic Church into decline. We do not know of one Catholic Apostolic Church assembly that has survived.

The principal lesson of this section is that it is possible for great numbers to be subject to delusion and be carried away with fanaticism and hysteria.

#### 4. Faith-Healing

Here Warfield chooses the most readable and rational presentation of the views of the Faith-healers, namely A J Gordon's *The Ministry of Healing, or Miracles of Cure in All Ages*. Gordon's special pleadings for healing to be treated as an ordinance alongside baptism and the Lord's Table are refuted convincingly. Warfield comes to grips with definition. A cure or healing is one thing. An instant miracle is another. Claims for miracle cures have caused great stirrings in every generation. The case is cited of Prince Alexander of Hohenloe who caused a momentous stir with his miraculous healings in Austria and Germany.

Yet when examined closely, the claims shrink away like morning mist before the rising sun. Healings there are in abundance. As David Hanson points out (see p16) healing is the business of the medical profession universally. There are innumerable healings, very few of which are so quick that they astonish the medical fraternity. Beyond question these do occur and we are deeply thankful for them. But miraculous instant works of creation in which natural means are bypassed are not convincingly documented. Even if they were we still face the huge failure rate which places the whole issue on a lower level than the New Testament.

As for trailing clouds of glory, of instantaneous stupendous creative miracles, and no failures, the last time they were seen was when the Prince of Peace ministered with his apostles. Irving tried to regain them. Vainly do many attempt to regain them today.

Even if we disagree with Warfield and believe we should keep our options open, let us give him credit for providing a most valuable historical perspective and for giving us an example of what it is to have a sane rather than naïve attitude toward extravagant claims.

---

## The Healing Process

---

*David Hanson, consultant surgeon from Leeds, attended the meeting described on page 9 and comments:*

No evangelical Christian will deny that the Lord Jesus Christ rules now over all things for the sake of his people, or that his authority is exalted above any other. Why then are some so beguiled by a desire for charismatic gifts of healing and others not?

Peter May's contribution to the discussion is very important. Extreme rarity characterises organic healing, even where it is most advertised. At the very least therefore, a considerable change is required in the way that charismatic Christians describe what they believe is happening today.

'Organic healing' is what most of us call a 'cure'. Not only do discomforts, disabilities, distresses vanish, but the underlying disease process, the pathology, is reversed. We see it in every one of us repeatedly, after the common cold or the healing of a cut.

Much more commonly 'healing' is being used to describe the relief experienced by sick believers, the establishment of trust in God's purpose, an acquiescence in continuing disease process or the results of injury.

Alongside these, there is that use of the word 'healing' to describe a large number of very temporary (or even wholly mistaken) convictions of cure.

The secular journalists rightly lampoon the purveyors of such 'healings'.

In Reformed belief, our view of the world, the 'Age of Miracles' is past. (The miraculous in Scripture peculiarly adorns the lives of Moses, Elijah and Elisha, Christ and his apostles — three short 'Ages of Miracles'). However truly we may speak of the wonders wrought by a 'God of Miracles' in bringing salvation to his creation, our daily trust is reposed in God revealed as the reliable upholder of a steady covenant with his creatures — a 'God of Providence'. (Peter May humorously illustrated the fact by advising anybody finding himself falling from the 10th floor of an office block to pray — not for a reversal of gravitational force, but for a hay-cart to park beneath him!)

Healing is a provision of God's loving creation. Medically speaking, haemostasis (bleeding stops), fibrosis (scars form), re-epithelialisation (blisters skin over), immunological recognition and phagocytosis (bacteria are isolated and destroyed), are examples of finely adjusted response to statutes and ordinances of God's covenantal relationship with creation. They are to be marvelled at (religiously!) and not dismissed as something second-best in the life of believers. Likewise, the influence of mind upon health is no less lawful.

Doctors are aware that symptoms are alleviated by other things than medi-

## **Christlike Miracles or Wonderful Healing? Conclusions**

From these articles we draw the following conclusions:

1. The miracles of the Bible and of the NT in particular are unique.
2. A study of history confirms this conclusion.
3. Present-day efforts to regain miracles have failed completely and dishonour the gospel.
4. We do not believe that God cannot grant miracles nor that he never gives them.
5. We do not say that demons have gone away nor that there is not real demon possession today. It is much more evident in some countries than others.
6. James 5:14-16 is a valid way to proceed with regard to healing. Leith Samuel deals with this in his book reviewed on page 18.
7. The 'greater works' referred to by Jesus (John 14:12) require to be read within the context of similar passages such as Matthew 11:11.

---

cines, for example, a good night's sleep, a holiday, a square meal, the resolution of some anxiety. They need to know what can be attributed to such things and what can genuinely be said to have resulted from a pill or an operation. We should expect as much in regard to 'healing ministry'.

Jesus' healings were immediately effective. His quiet command was sufficient intervention. He needed no 'work-up' and used no techniques of

relaxation or states of altered consciousness. At the temple gate and in the resuscitation of Eutychus, the apostles act with the same authority. A gifted healer, we think, would not hesitate to call the dead to life, or to restore a lost or severed organ. We question whether the Holy Spirit is the agent of 'healings' that require prolonged 'worship', 'ministry', singing, dancing and shouting. Try as we may, it is the priests of Baal and not the Spirit of Christ in Elijah that come to mind with these rituals.

---

---

## Should We Change?

---

---

### **Time to Wake Up! — Evangelical fantasy vs biblical reality**

*Leith Samuel, Evangelical Press, 1992, 158pp, £4.95*

Leith Samuel is a well known minister in Britain. Now retired he has 45 years of experience, both as a universities missionary from 1947-52 and thereafter pastor of Above Bar Church in Southampton for 28 years.

A more accurate title for the book might be, 'Should we change?' The author represents the old school of conservative evangelicalism and believes that the changes that have come about in evangelicalism have been harmful and weakening. He has lived through the theological renewal of the Reformed Faith which biblical emphasis he endorses. He has also more recently lived through the divisions that have followed the claims of the Charismatic Movement which he analyses in this book.

In the first chapter, *Is Scripture enough?* he points to various ways in which the authority of Scripture has been usurped in the past and shows that it is the sufficiency of Scripture that is being undermined today. The Bible is regarded as insufficient. This is seen in the call for miracles, tongues-speaking and higher experiences.

In the chapter, *What about healing on demand?* Samuel documents several cases known to him personally of people who were told they were healed at special meetings often with disastrous consequences. One sufferer, Dick, was told, "You are healed", so he set out to climb his favourite mountain. 'A few hundred yards up he had a haemorrhage. He dragged himself sadly back to his car and drove back to Reading with a double burden — his cancer not healed, and an overwhelming sense of guilt that he had not had enough faith. He was in that sad condition when I found him. I showed him the verses in Hebrews 11 where we read of some who by faith escaped the edge of the sword while others by faith (the same faith in the same God) were slain by the edge of the sword. It was a matter of sovereignty, not of their faith. Of course, God could have healed Dick of his cancer, just as he could have healed David Watson of his cancer. But he chose not to.'

There is a chapter with the title, *Has Rome changed?* and another, *Do all roads lead to God?* The book is highly relevant and easy to read. It is not aggressive or confrontational. Many personal and fascinating experiences are described. The author reveals a deep concern for the well-being and unity of evangelical churches. In no way does he follow a second degree type of separatism. He is simply realistic about the superficiality with which the Church has been weakened.

---

# Earthly-Mindedness

---

## Treatise on Earthly-Mindedness

*Jeremiah Burroughs (1599-1646), Soli Deo Gloria, 1992*

No doubt learning a proper attitude towards earthly things is a subject that is very beneficial to most of us. The title of the book under review may frighten the sceptics, but the handling of the subject in this just over 200 page volume comprising three short books will be found both illuminating and sweet to meditate upon.

The first book is a treatise on earthly-mindedness. The reader's attention is drawn to a chapter on 'Earthly-mindedness discovered in nine particulars'. Here, the Puritan doctor does not go for the obvious, materialism, but uncovers subtle symptoms that could be concealed easily within the heart. To illustrate this I list four of the nine points discussed:

1. When men look upon earthly things as the greatest things
2. When their choicest thoughts are busied about earthly things
3. When they are earthly in spiritual things
4. When they unquestioningly overcome great difficulties to further earthly matters.

In the later chapters he deals with the evils of such a state, and ends with directions to take the heart off earthly-mindedness.

The second book is a treatise on heavenly conversation. In this book the subject would be considered the reverse of the preceding. Burroughs urges Christians to use every means to live as citizens of heaven. One of the notable means mentioned is the example of other godly men. He is however against unquestioning dependency on godly men's established practices, but would rather that all use their responsibility to work out their own salvation.

Never is this responsibility more inescapable than at a time when godly men differ and take different sides on a particular issue. The author does not leave the reader on the horns of a dilemma even then. He advises,

When you see examples on both sides going contrary to one another, and both godly, examine this: which side has the most earthly inducements? For that way lies under the most suspicion which has more earthly inducements to bias the heart. Men that are godly are but godly in part, and though they might be as godly as other men in some things, yet there may be a temptation. If the temptation for earthly contentment lies more in one way than the other, you are to be more wary of one way than the other.

*Continued on page 20*

## **Carey/Grace Conference**

19-21 May 1993 Swanwick, Derbyshire.

Speakers and contributors include John Benton, Walter Chantry, Erroll Hulse, Brian Keen, Baruch Maoz, Poh Boon Sing, Robert Sheehan and Geoffrey Thomas. The conference is open to all church members, both men and women. Details and booking forms from: John Rubens, 22 Leith Road, Darlington, Co Durham DL3 8BG.

## **Carey Conference for Ministers**

Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire, has been booked for January 5-7, 1994

## **Carey Family Conference**

26-31 July 1993 Farney Close School, Bolney, Sussex. Principal speaker Tom Lutz of Anderson, Indiana. For brochure apply to Andrew Symonds, 2 Mill Hall Cottages, Cuckfield, West Sussex, RH17 5HX.

*continued from page 19*

The third book is an exposition of the text, 'Enoch walked with God' (Gen 5:24). This book deals with developing an intimate walk with God. Inevitably, there may seem to be an overlap of ideas in this and the second book, but a careful study of both will show how the discussion is made more thorough by this approach.

The illustrations in all three books have been used effectively to support the arguments and make the propositions clear. Unlike Brooks and Watson, whose illustrations are rich with historical figures, Burroughs is more keen on every day life examples, which surprisingly will fit very well in our time.

I do certainly recommend this volume to every Christian who has made his goal to fix his mind on Christ. It will rebuke, comfort, encourage and above all stay our thoughts on our high calling (Rom 8:29).

*Mulenga Bwalya, Kitwe, Zambia*

*Note.* Many superb Puritan titles are being produced by SOLI DEO GLORIA (See article in RT 131). These books are obtainable from Evangelical Book Shop, 15 College Square East, BELFAST, BT1 6DD.

---

# News

---

## Northern Nigeria

Courageous reporting by a modern day John Foxe reveals that Christians have been and are being massacred in Northern Nigeria. In order to protect this journalist he is nicknamed JO. He reports that the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) to which forty-six nations give allegiance has as an objective the ridding of the world of Judaism and Christianity and obtaining dominion over an Islamic Africa and world by the year 2000. Twenty-four of the forty-six nations are in Africa.

The brutal massacre of Christians in Northern Nigeria is part of a campaign for dominion. The descriptions of torture and death are pornographically horrendous. Many have been burned alive. Those ready to deny Christ are spared. The reports in our hands reveal that large numbers have been faithful to death and even in the face of gruesome death prefer to die believing. The numbers are in the thousands and not a week passes without reports of further atrocities.

## Papua New Guinea

Missionaries Lance and Robin Hellar have been labouring in a remote area of PNG. A white man was seen for the first time in 1957.

Some months ago Robin was assaulted with intention to rape by a notorious criminal. Mercifully his intent was foiled. The whole tribe became hostile to the missionaries in an environment where law and order

had broken down and the persevering work of many years seemed to have been in vain. Then in answer to fervent prayers the tide began to turn. The crimes of the rapist became too much for the tribe to bear.

It took an eight hour journey for Lance to travel to Lae to persuade the police to take action. The offender was arrested but escaped into the mountains and was only recaptured with great difficulty in an operation involving hundreds of men. He now awaits trial. In a culture where weakness is despised, the furore has been providentially overruled to remove the hostility of the people. Lance and Robin who have been determined to see the situation through have been given remarkable perseverance in the face of tremendous pressure to abandon the area. They are due to spend eight weeks at a Summer Institute of Linguistics programme which will also provide fellowship with other Christians. We pray that their strength will be renewed to continue their labours among the people of Hakwange.

## Italy

Pietro Loreface, of Ribera, Sicily, writes to say that the first Reformed Conference, *Grace and Truth*, will be held in Santa Severa, Rome from 23-25 April 1993. The main speaker will be Stuart Olyott. Others will include Pastor Olivier Favre of Lausanne. The organisers welcome the opportunity for Reformed Christians to meet each other and to seek together avenues of evangelistic out-

reach in Italy. Further details are available from EMF, 'Guessens', 6 Codicote Road, Welwyn, Herts AL6 9LY, UK.

Also we have just received the eighth issue of a very impressive Italian journal, *Studi di Teologia*, edited by Prof Pietro Bolognesi, CP 756, 35100 Padova, Italy. Each issue may be purchased separately from the above address. Issue number 2 (112 pages, cost £7) includes a translation of *The 1689 Confession of Faith*.

### **Sudan**

On the 6th of February, 1993 *The Daily Telegraph* reported that the Jubilee Campaign has published a 55 page report describing persecution in many countries. So far the Jubilee Campaign has received support from over 100 MPs.

'In Sudan', says the report, 'the civil war has led to a "genocidal reign of terror"', directed against the Christian South by the Islamic regime in Khartoum, with mounting evidence of the crucifixion of the male population of whole villages by government soldiers.'

### **UK – Tyndale Associates**

The Tyndale Fellowship, a fellowship of Christians engaged in biblical and theological research, wish to inform readers of a new category of membership: Tyndale Associates.

This is open to those who want to keep up to date with biblical and theological study or who have a general interest in the area. Unlike full membership, which is open only to those involved in professional re-

search or teaching, associate membership will be open to anyone with a recognised qualification or a letter of recommendation from a minister or church leader.

Associate members will:

- ★ be kept in touch with affairs of the Fellowship;
- ★ receive lists of Tyndale Fellowship recent publications;
- ★ receive 3 copies per year of the theological journal *Themelios*;
- ★ receive 2 Tyndale bulletins annually.

In addition there will be a members conference to examine a range of theological and pastoral issues.

*For further details and application form please write to: Ian Hodgins, 36 Selwyn Gardens, Cambridge, CB3 9BA, UK.*

### **Hyper-Calvinism in Northern Ireland**

The very essence of hyper-Calvinism is the denial of common grace and the free offer of the gospel. A magazine with the title *The Standard Bearer* (from Grandville, MI, USA) is a vigorous opponent of common grace. A church has been started in Larne, Co Antrim which is sending out a news sheet which propagates erroneous Calvinism. Hyper-Calvinism denies the historic Reformed faith.

Among the works of excellence from the ministry of Prof John Murray were his writings on the Free Offer (Works, vol 4 pp 113-114) and Common Grace (Works, vol 2 pp 94-119). See also *The Great Invitation* by Erroll Hulse, EP and *The Love of God for All Mankind* RT 76.



---

## 1992 Westminster Conference

---

The annual Westminster Conference at Westminster Chapel, Buckingham Gate, just down the road from Buckingham Palace, took place last year on December 8th and 9th. About 240 attended.

The conference began with a lucid paper delivered with passion, *John Calvin and the Spread of the Gospel in France*, by the French speaking Jean-Marc Berthoud, born in South Africa but resident in Lausanne, Switzerland. In 1555 there was only one Protestant church in France. A year later there were five. In 1562 there were 2,150! Calvin's purpose was to train pastors in Geneva and send them into France to evangelise and plant churches. But how can the rapid multiplication of believers and churches be explained? The historic background was skilfully narrated. A widespread spiritual enlightenment had taken place under Lefèvre (1455-1536) [Philip Hughes has produced a definitive biography of Lefèvre]. That was a major factor as was the effect in France of the writings of Martin Luther. Calvin insisted both on a high intellectual standard which included proficiency in Hebrew, Greek and Latin, but also calibre of character. The men called and commissioned to evangelise in France faced extreme dangers. Indeed of the 88 sent into France about nine were put to death.

A vigorous debate followed concerning the call to and training for the Christian ministry. How can justice

be done to *both* academic training and high standards of spirituality and calibre of character? (The conference is noted for adequate time allotted to debate, about an hour after each paper).

Paul Cook presented a paper on *Spurgeon's Gospel Preaching*. What is preaching if it is not *gospel* preaching? The gospel itself must be proclaimed in its 'naked majesty'. What if the congregation consists of believers? Paul Cook gave five reasons why the gospel is to be preached to believers. One reason is that we are not only saved by the gospel but *sustained* by it. He urged that preachers be themselves. He warned against being slavish in following a method, or an idea, or a single model, however illustrious that model may be (see article by Bill Payne, *The Preacher's Role Model*, RT 129). The genius of Spurgeon was his ability to proclaim the gospel in the context of exposition. For him every service was a gospel service and every sermon an exposition of the Word.

This paper too led to a constructive debate. Subsequently I have examined several books on preaching to discover the absence of chapters on evangelistic preaching. For instance the new book *Rediscovering Expository Preaching*, by John MacArthur Jr and his associates at Masters Seminary (Word Publishing, USA, 400 pages, 1992), has no chapter on evangelistic preaching.

David Kingdon's paper, *William Carey and the Origins of the Modern Missionary Movement* will be appreciated when the printed papers are available. His historical background was excellent as was his stress on the sheer perseverance of Carey in the early years of toil. The extensive change that has taken place since the forming of the Particular Baptist Society 200 years ago formed part of the debate. Sadly there are still many parts of the world which call for pioneer missionaries. However the balance has begun to swing as emerging nations take up the call to evangelise the world.

The second day began with a further paper of the highest quality, *David Bogue and Missionary Advance* by Noel Gibbard. David Bogue (1750-1825) is one of the great forgotten leaders and achievers of the Church. Bogue was a powerful preacher and the creator of an academy in which he himself tutored men for the ministry and mission field. Like the missionary pioneers and missionary enthusiasts of his time he was post-millennial and supremely optimistic in his view of the ultimate triumph of the gospel in the world. To him the preaching of the gospel was the way to introduce the latter-day glory in the earth. In yet another profitable debate motivation was discussed. To what extent did the vision of gospel victory motivate the missionary pioneers? And what about

our views today? To what extent has effort been stunted by pessimism? It was deemed that desire for Christ's glory in the success of the gospel, sheer gratitude for salvation, love for souls and the desire to save them from eternal burnings, are vital interrelated motives.

*Witchcraft in Salem*, a paper by Graham Harrison, was superbly researched. The issues emerging are relevant but too complex to develop in a short report. The material will enhance the value of the printed papers as will the final paper read by Philip Arthur, a biography of Jan Amos Comenius (1592-1670). Persecution compelled Comenius to leave his native East Moravia (the Czech part of Czechoslovakia). He never returned. He learned sanctification in adversity.

Pastor John Harris of Mirfield is the incoming secretary. John Miller, who has accomplished a great work in building up the conference over an eight year period, is retiring. It was John Miller who inspired the article, *What it is to be a Good Chairman* (RT 110). The art of debate is one of the benefits bequeathed to us by the leadership of Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones, an art which needs to be cultured more widely in evangelical circles. The profit obtained both through the papers and the debates was uniformly excellent.

# Objections to Immersion Answered

*Tom Wells*

## **Introduction**

Without doubt the most important question that relates to baptism is the question of the proper candidates. Some churches baptise infants, while others refuse to do so. Behind that difference in practice lie larger issues concerning the nature of the Church. That question needs to be examined in every generation so that we will some day come to unity. May God grant that unity before we expect it!

The other question concerning baptism, the question of the proper mode, would seem to be less important. Yet the churches of Jesus Christ have been divided on this question for many years, and the division is one that separates one congregation from another. How good it would be to settle it!

This series of articles addresses the single question of mode. Are we to baptise by sprinkling, pouring or by immersion?

In order to answer that question I have chosen to look at various objections to immersion raised by those who use other modes. I have tried to state these fairly. Others, of course, will make their own judgments about whether I have succeeded, but I have laboured not to misrepresent brothers who disagree with my conclusions.

After stating each objection, I offer my own answer to it. This, of course, is the crux of the matter. I can only hope and pray that I have done this wisely. Those who think I have failed are welcome to write to me on this subject.



*Tom Wells and Newton Bush lead the work at King's Chapel featured above*

In any case, if God is gracious to us we shall profit by examining these things once more. May the Lord help us all to do it with a prayerful spirit and an eager mind.

### **Objection 1: Words for Baptism tell us nothing about mode.**

Since it is common for Baptists to argue that the words for baptism mean immersion, some scholars have argued that there is nothing whatever about mode in these words. Let me try to deal with these words.

The Greek word that we are discussing is *baptizo* and its cognates, words formed on the same stem. John Murray, the Presbyterian theologian, has written ‘. . . we are led to the conclusion that though the word *baptizo* and its cognates can be used to denote an action performed by immersion yet they may also be used to denote an action that can be performed by a variety of modes. Consequently the word *baptizo* itself cannot be pleaded as an argument for the necessity of immersion as the mode of baptism.’<sup>1</sup>

Another Presbyterian has written, ‘If *baptizo* is ever used only once in Scripture where immersion is impossible, the argument from its selected meaning is of no value.’<sup>2</sup> (By ‘its selected meaning’ the author means the meaning selected by Baptists from the standard dictionaries. That meaning, of course, is *to immerse*.) The point of this statement seems to be this: if one use of *baptizo* does not mean immerse, then we have no assurance that any other instance means immerse.

One difficulty that we meet at the outset of this discussion is this: paedobaptists such as the two I have cited do not give us their own meaning for the word *baptizo*. A careful look through Professor Murray’s book yields no definition as such. But both Murray and Johnson seem to believe that *baptizo* in the New Testament means *washing*. I know that it is unfair to foist a meaning on them, but it is difficult to know what else to do. Johnson says, ‘Since these “divers” baptisings (those mentioned in Heb 9:10) were all performed by sprinkling, we have here the Bible’s explicit designation of sprinkling as its mode of baptism’ (Johnson, p 28). In this quotation it would seem to be fair to say that baptism is washing. Murray also writes, ‘The rite of baptism consists in washing . . .’ (Murray, p 86).

If we seek a reason for this lack of definition, it may be simply explained. For almost 2000 years all Christians have used the word baptism to mean the rite of initiation into the Christian Church. So, many speak of baptism without worrying specifically about the meaning the word had in first-century Greek. Nevertheless it is clear that both Johnson and Murray mean to discuss the meaning of baptism even though they do not give formal definitions.

Early in his book Murray discusses the meaning of *baptizo*. Writing of the cognate term *bapto* and its Hebrew equivalent *tbl*, he says, ‘There need be no question that *tbl* means to dip and so also does *bapto* which is the Greek rendering’ (Murray, p 10). He goes on to add, ‘. . . the dipping denoted by *tbl* and *bapto* is not always to be equated with immersion. This fact . . . needs to be

stressed at the outset' (Murray, pp 10-11). He then goes on to show that there are cases in the Old Testament where, for example, a living bird is dipped in the blood of another bird. He concludes: 'It is obvious that a living bird cannot be immersed in the blood of another bird. It may be dipped in such blood but such dipping could not be immersion' (Murray, p 11).

A careful reading of Murray shows that in his view the Hebrew term *tbl*, wherever it is translated by *bapto* always means *to dip* or *to immerse*. But, in his view, *to dip* is the much more common meaning.

What are we to make of this? Two things seem clear from Murray's discussion: first, in his judgment, these words speak of mode. He does not say as much, but in limiting the meaning to either immersion or dipping, the effect is to tell us that the words describe a mode.

But the second thing is equally important. The mode in both the cases of dipping and immersion is the same. It is the act of putting something down into a liquid. If Professor Murray will allow Baptists that much, we are not likely to quibble over our differences. It is true that he does find one instance where *bapto* translates another word, but even in this case he writes, 'It is possible that the meaning of the Greek rendering is that his (Nebuchadnezzar's) body was dipped in the dew of heaven' (Murray, p 14). So Murray's evidence, on his own showing, means that *bapto* in all but one inconclusive Old Testament case means to dip or immerse. In that one inconclusive case it may also mean to dip.

The Old Testament evidence according to Professor Murray points in one direction alone. *Bapto* means to place an object into a liquid. And that means that it refers to mode.

In discussing the New Testament evidence Murray goes into the ceremonial washings of the Pharisees at some length. But they need not detain us here except where *baptizo* or its cognates appear in the text. One such case is Luke 11:38 where we read that a Pharisee 'was surprised that He (Jesus) had not first ceremonially washed (baptised) before the meal' (NASB). Of this instance Murray says, 'Washing the hands by dipping them in water or, more probably, by pouring water upon them can be called baptism' (Murray, p 17). Dipping, then, according to Professor Murray may be the meaning here.

The central case against *baptizo* meaning immersion, however, is found in the passage, Hebrews 9:10-23. A glance at recent paedobaptist literature will show the importance of this passage for the argument that mode cannot be indicated by *baptizo*.<sup>3</sup>

The argument is this:

1. Hebrews 9:10 clearly speaks of baptisms (translated 'washings' in the NASB).

2. The ‘baptisms’ in view can be nothing other than the rites mentioned in the later verses of the passage. (This is Rayburn’s view, p 28. Murray, p 21, is more cautious. He says that verse 10 ‘must surely include the lustrations expressly referred to in the succeeding verses’.)

3. Yet these ‘baptisms’ are referred to as sprinklings in verses 13, 19 and 21.

4. The conclusion, then, is clear. A baptism is a washing. The word for ‘baptisms’ does not express a mode of any kind. Jay Adams has said of this argument: ‘In both the Old Testament passages, and in the book of Hebrews, these baptisms are designated as sprinklings. This argument is impossible to refute.’<sup>4</sup>

What can we say to this? Let’s see.

First, we must ask why the sprinklings mentioned in the following verses must be included in the ‘baptisms’ of verse 10. Verses 9-10 make a general statement about Old Testament practices. If the writer later speaks of various sprinklings, there is no apparent reason to include them in the ‘baptisms’.

Two things, however, may be said against my view. One might argue that, in Rayburn’s words (p 28), ‘The idea of immersion is foreign to the Jewish economy.’ In that case, clearly, the writer of Hebrews would have no immersions to refer to and would have to be thinking of some other thing that he calls ‘baptisms’. Since Rayburn wrote, however, Adamthwaite and others (see *RT* 109) have exploded this idea once for all. I will take this up in more detail under the next objection.

The other point that might be made is that the word ‘only’ in the phrase ‘they relate only to food and drink and various washings (baptisms)’ means to tell us that the writer sums up all ritual operations connected with the tabernacle under these three terms, and he omits nothing. Now admittedly, if that were the case, one of the three terms food or drink or baptisms would have to take in the sprinklings that follow.

But it is impossible to include all the ritual connected with the tabernacle under one of these three headings even if ‘baptisms’ really means washings. For example, there was the burning of both the sacrifices and incense connected with this ritual. But they will not readily fit into any of these categories. For that reason it is apparent that the writer means that ‘they relate only to such things as food’ etc. In that case, there is no reason the sprinklings could not be something additional to the ‘baptisms’. It is true that many commentators find the sprinklings to be included in the ‘baptisms’, but that is only natural once one supposes that the ‘baptisms’ include all the washings of the Old Testament ritual. Where that supposition is not made, there is no reason at all to include the sprinklings once we understand that there was a good deal of immersion connected with the tabernacle rites. We will take up that matter next. For now it is enough to see that *baptizo* and its cognates seem to refer to a mode of action, the placing of something into a liquid.

## **Objection 2: Baptism refers to mode. The mode is affusion.**

Rayburn has written (p 26): 'I challenge any immersionist to produce a single instance where the word (baptise) could not be translated with the idea of affusion.' My dictionary places both pouring and sprinkling under the heading of affusion. One of these two ideas, then, according to Rayburn will fit every biblical instance of the use of *baptizo*. In saying this he grants that the word refers to mode.

Rayburn readily concedes that *baptizo* means to dip as its primary meaning. He says, 'No scholar of any stature argues that the primary meaning of this word is not to dip' (p 25). In a gentle rebuke to our zeal he adds, 'Their (Baptists') lengthy lists of examples from secular Greek literature are hardly necessary. The word of reputable lexicographers is sufficient . . .' One reads this with a certain satisfaction, but also with a certain amazement. Nevertheless we pass on.

If the primary meaning of *baptizo* is to dip, in order to make his case Rayburn will have to cite cases where that meaning is impossible. He proceeds to give us such a list starting with Mark 7:4 which he translates, 'when they come from the market, except they baptise they eat not' (p 26). Of this verse he writes, 'Can it be imagined, even of a Pharisee, that every time he came in from the market he completely submerged himself under water? Of course not!' (p 26f).

To answer the question we must learn about the miqveh (plural, miqva'oth), the ritual bath used by the Jews for purification.

A prominent Jewish authority says, 'In all cases of ritual impurity it was necessary for the person or object to be immersed in a bath built in accordance with the rules laid down by the Rabbis.'<sup>25</sup> It goes on to point out that after the destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersion from Palestine such immersions fell largely into disuse except in the case of Orthodox women and some especially zealous men.

This shows at once that Rayburn's statement (p 28) that 'the idea of immersion is foreign to the Jewish economy' is very wide of the mark indeed.

Another Jewish authority defines the miqveh and ties it to Old Testament law (Torah). It describes it as, 'A body of stationary water used for ritual purification. By Torah law, a ritually impure person or object can be purified only through immersion in naturally flowing water (for example, a spring) or in a *mqvh* (miqveh). (It) must contain at least 40 *se'ah* . . .'<sup>26</sup> According to the same source (p 288), the 40 *se'ah* measure 'is the basis of all our modern calculation of the various measures of volume. (A miqveh) must contain 332 litres of water (87 gallons) . . .' This is a conservative estimate. Another scale of measure requires 573 litre or 151 U S gallons. The point of the large amount of water is described by the Jewish Encyclopedia (p 588) as providing 'sufficient water to cover entirely the body of a man of average size'.

Through the centuries, then, prior to the scattering of the people of Israel, their own understanding of the law led them to use immersion as the means of ritual purity.

Rayburn and others, however, are not without excuse in overlooking these facts. Adamthwaite (p 31) tells us that there was no archeological evidence of such pools until the mid 1960s. Then Israeli excavations at Masada under Yigael Yadin turned up a fine example from before AD70. Further finds have multiplied including miqva'oth from well before Christian times. Most important for our understanding of Mark 7:4 is the fact that such miqva'oth have now been found in connection with private homes of New Testament times. Adamthwaite (p 34) concludes from these facts that 'there is every reason to suppose that when a Pharisee, in particular, or a common person for that matter, came from the maelstrom of the market place, he passed through his domestic miqveh to cleanse himself from all the defiling contacts of the crowd before settling to a meal or to study Torah . . .' Rayburn's mistake is understandable, but it is nevertheless a real mistake.

The same thing can be said about Rayburn's question concerning Luke 11:38. 'Could anything be more absurd,' he asks, 'than the suggestion that Jesus would have been expected to submerge himself completely in water before eating each meal?' (p 27). We now know from archeology what we should have known from the simple reading of Scripture: there is nothing absurd here at all.

Let's keep in mind that Rayburn is citing examples in which, in his judgment, the idea of immersion is impossible. We proceed to his third example, 1 Corinthians 10:1-2. He quotes the passage in the King James Version and adds his own remarks:

Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptised into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.

We certainly know that not one of the Israelites was immersed in passing through the Red Sea. At most they were only sprinkled by the spray of the watery walls on either side of them. The Scripture tells us specifically that they went through '*dry shod*'. It was the Egyptians only who were immersed! This baptism of the fathers of Israel simply *could not by any stretch of the imagination have been an immersion*' (p 27 Italics his).

This instance, of course, is not a literal use of the word *baptizo*, but let us look into it.

The difficulty with Rayburn's argument arises from his trying to make this baptism literal. Note that he introduces a sprinkling of water about which Exodus is utterly silent. The Israelites were 'in the cloud and in the sea' only



figuratively. The same figure is used in verse 1 where they are said to have 'passed through the sea'. The sea and cloud were all around them. It was as if they were immersed in these waters. That is all that Paul's language requires. The ancient writer, Orpheus, speaks of the sun immersing himself in the water of the ocean.' Paul's use is of the same type.

Many paedobaptist writers have recognised this fact. Alford, for example, says that the Israelites 'passed under both (that is, the cloud and the sea), as the baptised passes under the water . . .'<sup>8</sup> Robertson and Plummer write (evidently quoting someone else, but with approval): 'Both cloud and sea represent "the element in which their typical baptism took place".'<sup>9</sup> Note that they do not see baptism as an element being placed on the Israelites, but, as in immersion, they see the Israelites' baptism as taking place in the element.<sup>10</sup>

Let me cite just one more of Rayburn's 'impossible' instances taken from p 29:

Judas Iscariot, when he partook of the supper in the Upper Room, was said by the Lord Himself to 'baptise his hand in the dish' (Matt 26:23), when he dipped the sop into the gravy used by all. To suggest that he immersed his hand in the gravy would be ridiculous.

It seems that when Baptists are not absurd they are ridiculous, according to Dr Rayburn!

This example, however, seems especially poorly chosen. Earlier Rayburn wrote (p 26), 'I challenge any immersionist to produce a single instance where the word could not be translated with the idea of affusion!' Since the idea of affusion, as we have seen, is the idea of pouring or sprinkling, let's see how this idea fits Matthew 26:23.

Could we translate: 'He who poured his hand with me in the bowl is the one who will betray me'? If not, would the following be an improvement: 'He who sprinkled his hand with Me . . .'? Doesn't dipped fit nicely because that is exactly what is meant? Here, then, is Rayburn's 'single instance', supplied by his own hand! Affusion cannot be the meaning here.

We still have to answer the question about immersion, however. Did Judas immerse his hand in the dish?

Rayburn has conceded that one possible meaning of the word *baptizo* is to dip (p 25). In fact, he calls this 'its primary meaning'. But he does not find the meaning to immerse anywhere in the New Testament. And he cannot imagine how Judas might have immersed his hand in the dish. Let's note several things here:

1. To dip and to immerse can be synonyms. The dictionary at my desk defines immerse in this way: 'To plunge or dip into water or other fluid so as to cover completely.' To immerse, then, is to dip with the further qualification that in immersion the person or object is covered completely.

2. Dagg (p 45) has shown that the purpose of a dipping determines how far that dipping proceeds. He gives several examples. When the rich man in Hades asked for Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water, Dagg points out that 'everyone understands that the whole of the part designated, the tip of the finger, is to be immersed'. On the other hand, when a 19th century teacher told his pupil to dip his pen in ink, everyone knew that he meant just part of it should be dipped.

These two points show us precisely what Jesus meant. He spoke of Judas dipping his hand in the bowl. No immersion took place because in this case Jesus was not referring to putting the whole hand in the dish.

But it is important to see that *baptizo* here refers to mode. The mode is not affusion, whether pouring or sprinkling. The mode is dipping. If Christian baptism were under discussion here, the mode would be the same, dipping. But in that case we would disagree about the extent. In any case, there is nothing in the word about any other mode.

*The conclusion of Tom Wells' study outlines five further Objections and Answers to Immersion as Baptism. These will appear in forthcoming issues of RT.*

## References

- <sup>1</sup> John Murray, *Christian Baptism*, Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Co, Philadelphia, 1974, p 29. Further references to this work will be cited as 'Murray'.
- <sup>2</sup> John Scott Johnson, *Baptism*, no publisher stated, Collingwood, N J, n d, p 27. Further references to this work will be cited as 'Johnson'.
- <sup>3</sup> See Murray, pp 20-23; Johnson, p 28. Cf also Robert Rayburn, *What About Baptism?* Baker, Grand Rapids, n d, pp 28f. Further references to this work will be cited as 'Rayburn'.
- <sup>4</sup> Quoted from Murray Adamthwaite, article entitled 'Baptism is Immersion' in *Reformation Today*, no 109 p 34. Further references to this article will be cited as 'Adamthwaite'. Adams' statement is taken from J E Adams, *The Meaning and Mode of Baptism*, Presbyterian & Reformed, 1975, p 8.
- <sup>5</sup> *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, KTAV Publishing, New York, n d, p 588.
- <sup>6</sup> Adin Steinsaltz, *The Talmud: A Reference Guide*, Random House, New York, 1989, p 223.
- <sup>7</sup> Cited by J L Dagg, *A Treatise on Church Order*, Gano Books, Harrisonburg, Virginia, 1982, p 29. Further references to this work will be cited as 'Dagg'.
- <sup>8</sup> Henry Alford, *The Greek Testament*, Moody Press, Chicago, 1958, vol II p 552.
- <sup>9</sup> Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 4th edition, Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1903, p 244, and F W Grosheide, *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Wm B Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1953, p 220.

**Editor**  
**Associate Editors**

ERROLL HULSE, 75 Woodhill Road, Leeds LS16 7BZ  
DAVID KINGDON, UK, JIM VAN ZYL, SA,  
TOM NETTLES, USA, JOHN CAMPBELL, AUSTRALIA  
DON GARLINGTON, CANADA

<b>Rates</b>	<b>Subscriptions</b>
1 year £8.50 — 2 years £15.00	UK & EUROPE
1 year £8.50 — 2 years £15.00	IRISH REPUBLIC
1 year \$14.00 — 2 years \$22.00	AUSTRALIA
1 year \$14.00 — 2 years \$22.00	NEW ZEALAND
1 year \$15.00 — 2 years \$24.00	USA

**Agents**  
**Lyn Hulse**  
75 Woodhill Road, Leeds LS16 7BZ, UK.

**Matthew Brennan**  
116 Willow Heights, CLONMEL,  
Co Tipperary

**Ray Levick**  
27 Coven Avenue, Bayswater North,  
Victoria 3153.

**Sovereign Grace Books**  
P.O. Box 62-159, Sylvia Park,  
Auckland 6.

**Great Christian Books Inc.**  
229 South Bridge Street,  
Box 8000, ELKTON, MD 21922.

**Tom Lutz**  
Edgewood Baptist Church,  
3743 Nichol Avenue,  
Anderson, IN 46011.

**Bill Ascol**  
457 Mohican Lane, Shreveport,  
LA 71106

1 year \$13.00 — 2 years \$22.00 BRAZIL (USA \$)

**Richard Denham**  
CP81, CEP 12201,  
São José dos Campos, SP.

1 year \$15.00 — 2 years \$24.00 CANADA

**Max Latchford**  
6020 154A Street, Surrey, B.C.,  
V3S 7H6.

1 year R14.00 — 2 years R22.00 SOUTH AFRICA

**Jim Holmes**  
PO Box 1681, Northcliff 2115.

1 year \$20.00 — 2 years \$35.00 SINGAPORE  
AND MALAYSIA  
(Singa \$)

**Peter Ong**  
Serangoon Garden, PO Box 426,  
Singapore 9155

Single copies one-sixth the above in each case which includes postage.

For airmail add £4.50 sterling equivalent p.a.

Gifts are welcomed and those who wish to support the Magazine should make out their cheques to "Reformation Today".

Bound volumes available: 71-90 £18 or \$30, 91-110 £22 or \$35, post free

----- cut here -----  
**SUBSCRIPTION FORM**

Please send to:

Name:

Address:

Reformation

Today

Bound

Volume

Tick

1 yr	<input type="checkbox"/>
2 years	<input type="checkbox"/>
71-90	<input type="checkbox"/>
91-110	<input type="checkbox"/>

I enclose..... Your name and address:

Please enclose gift card Yes/No

Please send me a receipt Yes/No

**CONTENTS**

- 1 Editorial**
- 2 Church Government – checks and balances** Editor
- 9 Christlike Miracles or Wonderful Healing?**  
*– Report of a meeting addressed by Dr Peter May*
- 11 What did Warfield really say?** Editor
- 16 The Healing Process** David Hanson
- 18 Should we Change?**  
*– A Review of a book by Leith Samuel*
- 19 Earthly-Mindedness**  
*– A Review* Mulenga Bwalya
- 21 News**
- 23 1992 Westminster Conference** Editor
- 25 Objections to Immersion Answered – part 1** Tom Wells
-