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*Baruch Maoz and his wife Bracha relaxing with Dr Poh Boon Sing
at the Conference Centre*



*Speakers and contributors at the first Grace/Carey Conference.
From left to right are Erroll Hulse, Baruch Maoz, Walt Chantry, Bob Sheehan,
Geoff Thomas (who acted as conference chairman), Brian Keen and John Benton*

Editorial

How do we witness to those who do not believe?

Alister McGrath is an Anglican professor of historical and systematic theology at Wycliffe Hall, Oxford. He is an author of international reputation. At Beeson Divinity School, Birmingham, Alabama, last year I heard him speak on *Reformation: a Living Option for Today's Church*, in which he affirmed clearly the huge significance of the 16th century Reformation and the need for reformation in our Western world today.

His most recent book is published by IVP and concerns the important subject of how Christians should witness to those who do not believe. The title of the book is *Bridge Building* and the sub-title, *Effective Christian Apologetics* (286 pages £6.95). This subject is not one for lazy minds. One big word like PRESUPPOSITIONALISM and some will move immediately to the frig for a mega coke and then spread out before the TV to recover from the shock!

Yet apologetics, how we present the truth, is a central issue. It affects every fibre of our thinking. Apologetics is basic to our evangelism as Austin Walker made clear in an excellent article in *RT* 102. See also his tribute to Cornelius Van Til (1895-1987) in *RT* 98.

Alister McGrath writes well. He is eclectic in his approach which means that scholarship is the big deal. Hence he tends to place modernists, neo-orthodox and Roman Catholic theologians on the same level as evangelical scholars which is how most scholars write. Scholarship is important but we should avoid anything which conveys the idea that the truth is relative rather than absolute. Nevertheless I think McGrath's positive attitude toward Luther and Calvin is more than merely academic. A genuine respect for the Reformation and a desire to see reformation is truly exceptional in the Anglican world today. (When a vote was taken among the bishops as to whether David Jenkins, a crusading modernist, should be disciplined, 39 voted against discipline, and only 13 for!).

In Reformed circles Cornelius Van Til is regarded as the foremost thinker and teacher in the subject of apologetics. Van Til can be difficult to understand. It is no marvel that McGrath misconstrues Van Til when he suggests that he leaves us with no common ground with the non-believer and that dialogue is excluded. That is McGrath's conclusion not Van Til's.

It is understandable that those reading Van Til come to that erroneous conclu-

Front cover: *CARING FOR LIFE* Open Day saw sunshine this year! Many visited the project for the first time. Peter Parkinson (left) is shown with David Kingdon. Peter Parkinson spoke at the Grace/Carey Conference on Romania. That is not reported in this issue. The situation in CIS and in Romania particularly is complex. We hope to have material on this subject in future issues.

sion. It is an error made mostly by those who have not come to terms with the tension that there is between total depravity and human responsibility. When we affirm that man is totally depraved we do not mean by that that man is as bad as he can possibly be but rather that every part of his nature is fallen: affections, mind, will and conscience. Because man is fallen he is unable to think spiritually. His tendency is to resist and distort the truths and he is never neutral about the gospel (Rom 1:18-20). Yet he is still completely responsible. Readers of Van Til can easily slip into the false conclusion that since the stance of the unbeliever is one of alienation it is impossible to proceed further with dialogue. Nothing is further from the reality. We are ready to discuss any subject with unbelievers but we do so with the advantage of knowing how the natural mind works.

The following summary of our presuppositions will help readers get into and benefit from the article by Jim van Zyl.

1. We believe the Bible as it stands. We do not begin as though the Bible might or might not be reliable. It is God's infallible Word. As Christians we have reached full persuasion about this because of the inward witness of the Holy Spirit.
2. Those who do not believe by reason of the rebellion (the fall) are not neutral about God and the Bible. The natural man is at enmity to God (Rom 8:7).
3. This fallen mind-set must always be kept in mind when we witness to our friends.
4. Those who do not believe may suppress or distort the truth, yet are responsible for their attitudes (see Romans 1).

5. Even though unbelievers may take the stance of indifference to the truth and rejection of it we know from the Scriptures that by nature they are aware of the reality of God and the reality of creatorship.
6. While Christians allow for the fact that unbelievers are not neutral but biased it is important at every point to observe genuine objections and stumbling blocks and remove these.
7. There is no subject which does not relate in one way or another to God's creation and to his law. All subjects therefore can offer channels for us to reason about the truth (see Acts 17 as an example).
8. We are responsible as Christians to take the gospel to all and as we do that our confidence is never in the natural man but always in the power of the Holy Spirit who will convince the world of sin, righteousness and judgment.

About 125 pages of McGrath's book *Bridge Building* are devoted to overcoming barriers to faith. Subjects include suffering, the challenge of other religions, the resurrection, the deity of Christ, Marxism, Feminism, Postmodernism, and the New Age. Here is much valuable material but I do not think that McGrath really comes to grips with the full implications of the fall and its consequences for the will of man.

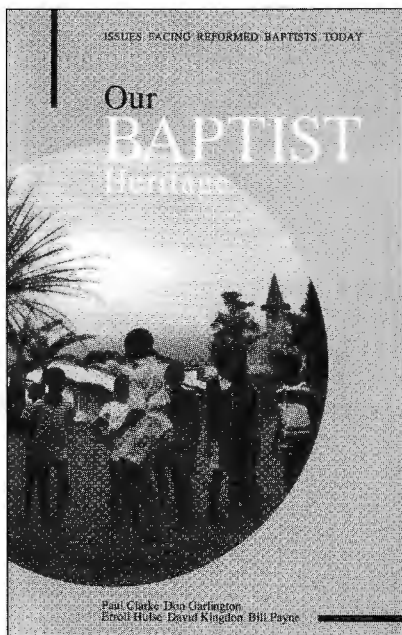
Schaeffer's Contribution to our view of the Church

What impression is received by those who visit your church for a worship service? Is there a sense of reverence and love for our Triune God. Is there a sense

of the presence of the Holy Spirit? What are the Christians like? Are they enthusiastic and have they come with a sense of expectancy? The objective feature is the primary one. If the Lord himself is not with us then all is in vain. Next in importance is a love for humanity. If the Christians who gather are only interested in themselves where does this leave the visitor? It is possible to visit Reformed churches and find no evident interest in people. Can we imagine our Lord coming into this world and showing not the slightest concern about people?

I will never forget the impression made upon me at L'Abri in Switzerland where Francis Schaeffer conducted his unique ministry. It was essentially an evangelistic ministry specialising in disentangling those who had become confused or disillusioned. It was essentially apologetics in practice. There were lectures on art, music, existentialism, philosophy and theology. There were of course Lord's Day services, but always expressed in one way or another as a love for people. There was participation. There was opportunity for questions and debate. That never seems to happen in some churches.

Even though there may not be that kind of participation it is important at the beginning of a service, or early on, that visitors be made to feel welcome. Also it is helpful to remind the congregation of the purpose of the gathering and from the outset give an idea of the theme and direction of the service. It helps too to make personal references of special need for prayer or of gratitude for encouragements received. In this way the personal element is strengthened, for while worship is essentially theocentric it comes from a human base of people who relate to each other in the bonds of love.



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Francis Schaeffer's Contribution to our view of the Church

Thomas K Johnson

In the 1920s and 30s the Presbyterian Church in the USA was convulsed by the fundamentalist/modernist controversy. The public issue in the controversy was whether or not the Church should require its pastors to adhere to what were then called the 'fundamentals' of the faith, doctrines such as the full inspiration of the Bible, the Virgin Birth, the miracles in the Bible, the substitutionary death of Christ and the personal, visible return of Christ. A moment's reflection shows that without these doctrines one could maintain a form of religion, but it would not necessarily be distinctly Christian. Two different religions were competing for control of the Church. Finally, in 1936, J Gresham Machen, a founder of Westminster Seminary and a key conservative Reformed theologian, was expelled from the Church along with several of his fellow travellers. Their natural recourse was to start new church structures. The split, as these things tend to be, was ugly. Many people were hurt and many relationships were broken. Conservatives and liberals joined in mutual name calling. Even worse, the Conservatives who were expelled or left in protest, broke off joint endeavours with the Conservatives who decided to stay in the work for renewal. So the Bible believing leaders on both sides felt betrayed and rejected. Former friends and fellow workers would hardly talk to each other.

Running around in the circles of those who were expelled was a bright, energetic, newly converted seminary student who gained prominence as a Reformed theologian thirty years later, Francis Schaeffer. Those experiences equipped him to make a distinctive contribution to an adequate Reformed view of the Church that addresses some of our current problems of liberalism, traditionalism and the application of the biblical message to a post-Christian culture. I will briefly outline some of his contributions to our view of the Church.

The Church - A Bride

First, the Church must live as the faithful bride of Christ. Schaeffer points out that both the individual believer and the Church as a whole are described as the bride of Christ in the Bible, while both the Old and New Testaments compare the relationship of God and his people with that of a husband and wife in marriage (Eph 5:25-32; Rev 10:6-9; 2 Cor 11:1,2; Rom 7:4; Ps 73:27; Isa 1:21; Ex 34:12-15; Ezek 6:9). This description of the Church implies that the

relationship of the Church to Christ must be marked by the same intensity of love and exclusiveness of affection that mark a proper marriage.

From the bride/groom metaphor follow three corollaries that Schaeffer points out. The first is that unfaithfulness to Christ by the Church is properly called 'spiritual adultery'.¹ Under this heading he expounds several passages from the Old Testament. And then he pointedly claims that liberal theology is a form of spiritual adultery.

It denies the personal God *who is there*. It denies the divine, historic Christ. It denies God's way of salvation. The liberals elevate their own humanistic theories to a position above the Word of God, the revealed communication of God to men. They make gods which are no gods, but are merely the projections of their own minds.²

He is quick to point out that not every individual who has been slightly influenced by liberal theology is personally guilty of spiritual adultery.³ But liberal theology as a whole teaches a religion different from biblical Christianity and therefore liberal theology (including neo-orthodoxy) comes under the prohibition of idolatry and unfaithfulness to God found throughout Scripture.

A second corollary is that 'If God's people turn away in spiritual adultery, it will not be long until the following generations are engaged in physical adultery, for the two things go hand in hand'.⁴ At this point Schaeffer cites Hosea 4:13. 'They sacrifice on the mountain tops and burn offerings on the hills, under oak, poplar and terebinth, where the shade is pleasant. Therefore your daughters turn to prostitution and your daughters-in-law to adultery.'

Most of the Protestant denominations in the United States came under the influence of theological liberalism in the 1930s. And by the 80s the American culture shaped by those mainline churches was marked by promiscuous sex and every sort of perversion. A similar historical order can be observed in the other Western countries. This is no accident. He claims there is a cause/effect relationship between spiritual adultery and sexual adultery, with the effect coming a generation or two later because there is a *cultural memory* of Christian ethics that lingers after the biblical basis is gone.

As the bride puts herself in the bridegroom's arms on the wedding day and then daily, and as therefore children are born, so the individual Christian is to put himself or herself in the Bridegroom's arms, not only once for all in justification, but moment by moment. Then the Christian will bear Christ's fruit out into the fallen, revolted, external world.⁵

This third corollary represents the positive side of the bride/groom metaphor.

Without it, spiritual fruitfulness in a fallen world would be hopeless. But this should not only be the character of our personal walk with God; we should probably interpret some of what Schaeffer says about the Church in light of this metaphor. For example, he writes: ‘The first thing the Christian community should do is to stand *as a community* in a living, existential, moment by moment relationship to God.’⁶ This means that the organisation and programme of the Church should depend on answers to prayer and the empowering of the Holy Spirit. Unfortunately, ‘As far as the world can see, our whole organisational programme is set up as though God isn’t there and we have to do everything ourselves on a Madison Avenue basis.’⁷

The Church - Loving and Holy

In addition to the bride/groom metaphor, a second major motif in Schaeffer’s view of the Church has to do with the relation between love and holiness. Stated positively, the Church must seek to demonstrate simultaneously both the love and the holiness of God, which is possible only by the power of the Holy Spirit. The demonstration of the love of God comes by the practice of observable love among believers which leads to a reality of community among believers. The demonstration of the holiness of God comes by the practice of purity of doctrine and morals in the visible Church.

The framework of love and holiness enabled Schaeffer to make some penetrating observations about church life. They are worth quoting at length.

If we stress the love of God without the holiness of God, it turns out to be only compromise. But if we stress the holiness of God without the love of God, we practise something that is hard and lacks beauty.

In the flesh we can stress purity without love or we can stress the love of God without purity, but... in the flesh we cannot stress both simultaneously. In order to stress both simultaneously, we must look moment by moment to the work of Christ, to the work of the Holy Spirit. Spirituality begins to have real meaning in our moment by moment lives as we begin to exhibit simultaneously the holiness of God and the love of God.⁸

I perceive again three corollaries of the principle of demonstration of love and holiness. The first relates to discipline. The holiness of God requires that we pursue the purity of the visible Church; this requires that ‘the liberals in the church should come under discipline’.⁹ And this discipline should not come in ‘one great burst of enthusiasm’,¹⁰ but should be done continuously, case by case. And at the same time, those who come under discipline, who may even be expelled from the church, must be shown real neighbourly love. Anything less is a denial of the love of God.

A second corollary has to do with relations among Bible-believing Christians. If the battle for the doctrinal purity of the Church is lost, it may be necessary for true Christians to leave their former visible organisation. Then 'it will not be a simple situation where all the faithful Christians will come out at the same time'.¹¹ At that point in time, love of the Christian brother requires visible expressions of love between Bible-believing Christians who leave and those who choose to stay. Actions taken in the name of purity of doctrine must be matched with actions in the name of love of the true Christian brother. And it will normally require some organisational framework to express this love among true believers.

A third corollary is that those who leave and those who stay longer in a denomination splitting over doctrinal impurities must guard against improper tendencies in themselves. If in the name of holiness we leave, we must not become loveless and hard, thinking that every doctrinal disagreement is a matter to split over. If out of love we stay in a doctrinally mixed denomination a little longer, we must not become latitudinarian and think truth does not matter.¹² 'Beware of the habits we learn in controversy.'¹³

The Church - Freedom within Form

A third motif in Schaeffer's writing on the Church is that the ministry of the Church must be marked by freedom within form. In response to the question of whether the Church as an institution would survive the 20th century or die of irrelevance, Schaeffer claimed the Church would thrive if it practised the proper balance of freedom and form. 'Form' has to do with maintaining continuity with biblical principles. 'Freedom' has to do with being contemporary, rather than ossified.

As examples of form, Schaeffer mentions eight principles needed to guide the policy of the Church. They are:

1. Local congregations are to exist and are to be made up of Christians.
2. These congregations are to meet together in a special way on the first day of the week.
3. There are to be church officers (elders) who have responsibility for the local churches.
4. There should be deacons responsible for the community of the church in the area of material things.
5. The Church is to take discipline seriously.
6. There are specific qualifications for elders and deacons.
7. There is a place for form on a wider basis than the local church.
8. The two sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper are to be practised.¹⁴

Most of these are pretty common to Reformed Christians. Schaeffer saw this list as a set of examples, not as exhaustive.

Within form he insisted the Church has a great deal of freedom. Under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, the Church must adapt itself to the local situation. And unless it does so, the Church will drop into an ossified, irrelevant traditionalism.

As examples of freedom Schaeffer mentions what time on Sunday a church will meet, whether in the morning, afternoon or evening. What language will be used in worship and whether a pastor will only preach to the congregation or spend time answering questions asked during the service.¹⁵ During the 60s Schaeffer's chapel was filled with people in blue jeans and barefoot, and they found no biblical reason to suggest anything different. This same freedom allowed them to extend the sermon from the usual twenty minutes to an hour and a quarter. Such freedoms allowed them truly to apply the biblical gospel to the people they met.¹⁶

A proper combination of form provided by Scripture and freedom under the Holy Spirit avoids, on the one hand, the problems of liberalism that minimise or deny biblical form, and on the other hand traditionalism that thinks that God commands everything to be done exactly as it has always been done. The goal is truly to apply the Word of God to the people in our communities.

Schaeffer has not given us a complete theory of the Church, nor does he claim to do so. He simply assumes much of traditional Reformed ecclesiology. But I think he has provided a helpful framework for dealing with many current issues.

This article first appeared in 'The Outlook', 2201 Oak Industrial Dr, NE, Grand Rapids MI 49605, USA, January 1993. Dr Johnson is pastor of Hope Evangelical Church, Iowa City, IA, USA.

Footnotes

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| ¹ <i>The Complete Works of Francis A Schaeffer: A Christian Worldview, vol 4; A Christian View of the Church, 2nd ed.</i> Westchester II; Crossway Books, 1985 p139, hereafter cited as FS 4. | ⁷ FS 4:40 |
| ² FS 4:144 | ⁸ FS 4:152 |
| ³ FS 4:146 | ⁹ FS 4:154 |
| ⁴ FS 4:142 | ¹⁰ FS 4:158 |
| ⁵ FS 4:135 | ¹¹ FS 4:159 |
| ⁶ FS 4:48 | ¹² FS 4:159 |
| | ¹³ FS 4:157 |
| | ¹⁴ FS 4:53-60 |
| | ¹⁵ FS 4:66-67 |
| | ¹⁶ FS 4:91 |

What is Presuppositionalism and why is it Vital?

Jim van Zyl

Following his great exposition on the doctrine of salvation, justification by faith alone, the apostle Paul urges that believers be transformed by the renewing of their minds. All transformation of life comes through the renewing of the mind; a Christian must always think like a Christian. Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones, in stressing the importance of having absolute morals or principles in our lives, said that certain things are quite unthinkable, and we must never do them – we must never consider them.¹ Lying, blasphemy, stealing, adultery are among absolute non-starters.

In seeking to be obedient to God's revelation the Christian must never move outside that framework of thought.

Our Knowledge is Subject to the Lordship of God

All knowledge we possess is that which God, the Lord of all knowledge, reveals to us. This knowledge is based on revelation. He always takes the initiative since to wait passively for us to discover the truth would be futile in the light of our spiritual blindness (2 Cor 4:4). We do not deserve this knowledge, but God gives it to us as a part of his redemptive mercy and common grace.

'Knowledge of God produces obedience (Jn 17:26; 2 Pet 1:3,5; 2:18-20). Conversely, obedience to God leads to deeper knowledge of God. They are inseparable and simultaneous. It is certainly true that if you want to obey God more completely, you must know him; but it is also true that if you want to know God better, you must seek to obey him more perfectly.'²

To determine if someone has truly been given knowledge from God, they do not need to take a written exam. It is how they live that gives the answer. A bended knee before the Lordship of God is the way to deeper knowledge of God.

The example of Balaam shows us that it is possible to have a very full knowledge about God and not practise that knowledge in a life of holiness. It is possible to have a double life, to live in besetting sin such as covetousness or adultery and yet to use theology to make a living just as others forge a living out of their

sciences. For that reason it is important to maintain application of the Scriptures which search our hearts and lives with regard to holy living.

God's Lordship of Knowledge

We must not think of God as far away since he is omnipresent. In that sense the very knowledge that I now possess is the result of God's feeding it into my mind constantly. God does this because, through Christ, he has established a covenant of friendship with me in which he decides to reveal more and more of himself to me. I stress that a spiritual understanding of the Scriptures is the work of the Holy Spirit.

God's Lordship is not only comprehensive, it is also absolute in the richness and depth of its quality. *All knowledge*, secular and sacred (I use the two words to indicate different areas of knowledge, not in the sense of the qualities of evil and good), originates from him and he is therefore Lord of all knowledge in physics, medicine, engineering, bio-chemistry as well as all knowledge about himself as the Divine, Triune God.

Presuppositionalism Defined

John Frame's definition is: 'A presupposition is a belief that takes precedence over another and therefore serves as a criterion for another. An ultimate presupposition is a belief over which no other (belief) takes precedence. For a Christian, the content of Scripture must serve as his ultimate presupposition.'³

In any system of knowledge the starting point is probably more crucial than anything else. The reason for this is that the point of departure is going to determine how you end or what your conclusion is going to be. An obvious example is basic mathematics. If, in answering a question, you start with the correct theorem your answer is likely to be correct. If you start with the wrong theorem your answer will be incorrect. The theorem is your 'presupposition'.

Both Christians and non-Christians have pre-existing presuppositions that determine how they think, live and act. More often than not they are unaware of this pre-existing set of values they have. Each one takes precedence over the other until we reach a final bed-rock of either a few values or of one value that takes precedence over them all.

It is therefore quite unfair and even nonsensical to say that non-Christians are 'neutral', 'objective' and 'unbiased', while Christians are 'biased' and 'prejudiced'. Such thinking is a myth. Both sides have definite presuppositions according to which they live and act.

Put another way, we are speaking here of the self-sufficiency of God. 'He must be the final point in all human predication. He is then like the sun from which all lights on earth derive their power of illumination... So the very idea of any fact in the universe is that it is derivative. God has created it. It cannot have come into existence by itself, or by chance. God himself is the source of all possibility, and therefore, of all space-time factuality.'⁴ The idea of light from the sun is only an illustration. We know that God created light prior to creating the sun and that other sources of light operate apart from the sun.

Frame helpfully points out, 'This doctrine [Suppositionalism] is merely the out-working of the Lordship of God in the area of human thought. It merely ascribes the doctrine of scriptural infallibility to the realm of *knowing*.'⁵ (My italics.)

It is an affirmation that our knowledge is 'servant-knowledge'. What does that mean? It means that we take the inspiration and authority, infallibility and inerrancy of the revelation God has given us in his Word as seriously as it is possible for any mortal, fallible man to do.

It means that when we come to the Scriptures, we come with a 'servant' mentality; that we do not start with ourselves or our thinking and philosophy of God and life and creation since that would be a denial of our 'servant' mentality which in turn would be a denunciation of the key characteristic of a servant which is obedience.

Not all Evangelicals agree. Thus Sproul states, 'The presuppositionalist maintains that you cannot get to God by starting with the self... and the traditionalist argues that the self is the only possible starting place...'⁶ I will return to this argument, but for now, let me say that it seems to me that Sproul is confusing theology with psychology.

Circular Reasoning

The Christian is faced with the objection that his argument is 'circular' and such arguments are normally considered fallacious. In other words he begins with a presupposition and from that draws certain conclusions. He should, so the argument goes, start off on 'neutral' ground and build his case from 'neutrality' to 'certainty'. That would make it acceptable. How can one answer such a strong allegation?

Firstly I would suggest that if the premise is true then it is not necessarily wrong to argue in a circle. A syllogism is an acceptable 'circular' way of reasoning, provided the premise is correct and nobody would question that! Thus:

Socrates is a man.
All men are mortal.
Therefore: Socrates is mortal.

You may recall my earlier point, namely, that a Christian must always think like a Christian. Thus a committed Christian must not and dare not reason like a non-Christian in any of his thought processes. He dare not move his 'premise' as if he were playing a game of chess in which the 'pieces' have to be moved around.

Therefore in this particular form of reasoning, the Christian is acting true to his own 'servant-Lord' relationship when he 'presupposes' the existence and actions of an infinite personal God. It would destroy his 'servanthood-in-covenant' relationship if he tried to think in any other (for example, 'neutral') manner.

Can you imagine the prophets or apostles arguing from 'neutrality' to 'certainty'? That is absurd. The reason Christians are asked to do so is, I suspect, to 'prove' their 'good faith' and 'objectivity', and thereby presumably their honesty and integrity in establishing their case in order to win 'converts'.

I would strongly suggest this is in itself a fallacious argument. It presupposes that because a man starts from a prior 'presupposition' stance his argument is necessarily suspect and dubious. But no one applies this to mathematicians or physicists. They commence with a theorem (such as the two parallel lines on the same plane that never merge) or other scientific facts (no one has ever actually seen a black hole or a neutrino) that are accepted but cannot be proved. Or alternatively they begin with an hypothesis which they then set about proving! Why can *they* commence with a presupposition or premise and then bring forward their evidence, when theologians who follow the same procedure are ruled out of court? That is hardly just!

We do not have to Prove the Existence of God

With this in mind, it is of the utmost importance for us as Christians to reiterate the absolute and irrevocable principles:

First, no one who engages in any argument can avoid starting within a circle of presuppositions. As John Frame puts it '... no system can avoid circularity, because all systems... non-Christian as well as Christian... are based upon presuppositions that control their epistemologies, argumentation and use of evidence... A rationalist can prove the primacy of reason only by using a rational argument. An empiricist can prove the primacy of sense-experience only by some kind of appeal to sense-experience...'⁸

Second, while the Christian can and must use every argument that he can legitimately use in debate with the non-Christian, it is vital for him to realise that he is not beholden to anyone to 'prove' the existence of God. It is important to draw a distinction between 'doing' something and feeling 'beholden to do' something. The Christian is primarily to glorify God. Anything over and above that is a bonus of grace granted to the non-Christian.

Third, it is equally important to realise that while we must use every possible argument we can muster for God's existence, man's sinfulness and need of salvation through Christ, it is finally and ultimately the work of the Spirit that causes the breakthrough in those and related areas.

As Dr M Lloyd-Jones puts it: 'We must never forget that the Holy Spirit leads us to... an understanding of the truth... the vital question is, "Has the Spirit been enlightening your mind? About what? About God himself!"... It is the Spirit who convicts of sin... Similarly the Spirit leads us to a knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, his person and his work.'⁸

You may ask, 'If it is the Spirit's work then what is the purpose of using every possible argument?' The answer is that we do not know what part of the truth the Spirit use. The secret things belong to the Lord. It is our responsibility to use every legitimate means to present the gospel, and let God the Holy Spirit use what he plans to use.

Fourth, Sproul, Gerstner and Lindsley in their worthwhile and helpful book, *Classical Apologetics*, seem clearly to oppose the 'presuppositional' position of Van Til, Frame and others which we suggest in this article is the correct approach.

They say that it is self-evident that apologetics 'must start with the person who is making the intellectual (that is, apologetical) journey. One simply cannot start outside himself... As the farmer told the tourist who asked for directions, "You shouldn't start here"'.⁹ I must confess that the farmer's answer sounds more like a negative comment than an answer to the tourist!

Be that as it may, we do not have the space to enter into all their arguments about the 'presuppositional' approach, so I will only comment on their first point made above. My reaction to the statement that one cannot 'start outside himself', is to question whether there is not some confusion here between the psychological and the theological. From a psychological point of view one obviously has to start from oneself! There is literally nowhere else to start from!

But if the statement means 'theologically' then I would respectfully suggest that unless they clarify such a statement a great deal more than they have, it has some

dangerous implications. Would they say the same thing about the Scriptures? And if so, would that not mean setting the intellect over and above the Scriptures?

Fifth, Van Til makes it quite clear that we can and must show the non-Christian the ‘absurdity’ of his position.¹⁰ As Dr Francis Schaeffer used to ask, ‘How can the impersonal plus time plus chance give rise to the personal!?’ The secular and humanistic intellectual simply has no answer to that. His conclusion is as per Sartre and Camus, ‘Life is a sick joke... an absurdity.’

Proofs of God’s Existence

The theological text books describe three ways in which attempts are made to prove God, the Ontological argument, the Cosmological argument and the Teleological argument. I will not outline the first which has to do with the reality of existence and reasoning about that. The next is related to it:

The Cosmological Argument

This argument ‘attempts to infer the existence of God from the existence of the cosmos or universe... Such arguments are sometimes called first-cause arguments because they attempt to infer that God must exist as the first or ultimate cause of the universe... The argument claims or assumes that the universe had to have a beginning, a first moment of existence. To explain that first moment a cause is necessary, and God is inferred as that cause...’¹¹

Arguments against this position are: (i) The universe might always have existed, (ii) if everything requires a cause, then God also needs a cause, (iii) the existence of each object can be explained in terms of other objects, thus there is no need to explain the whole.

But it is not as easy as that.

Stephen Hawking can describe the ‘big bang’ theory in some detail, in his ‘A Brief History of Time’,¹² but he must still find a ‘cause’ for the theory.

As Sproul puts it: ‘Either we must postulate necessary, self-existing being, or we must flee from the absurdity of self-creation, committing intellectual and scientific suicides. The law remains intact “ex nihilo nihil fit - out of nothing, nothing comes”.’¹³

How does this fit in with ‘presuppositionalism’? Exceedingly well, since we

accept the words of Genesis 1:1 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth...', as a basic presupposition which precedes any scientific proof.

We do not have time to develop this argument any further, but I would suggest that it has more going for it than we are perhaps prepared to admit. Why should every other physical object have a cause, yet the greatest of all - the universe - just happen?

Indeed some from the scientific fraternity have come to the conclusion that the universe did come into existence. Paul Davies says; 'The most important scientific discovery of our age is that the universe did not always exist.'¹⁴

I must stress at this point that many evidences which demonstrate the creation and point to the absurdity of evolution are of value to the Christian, but in reasoning with the non-believer we are back to the reality that he will choose to follow his own prejudice (Rom 1:20-22). Care must be taken in using scientific evidence as this may be wrong. In some branches of science more knowledge often leads to correction of what was formerly accepted. We proclaim the truth of God's Word and his Word is not subject to amendment or correction.

The Teleological Argument

This is similar to the Cosmological argument and is often called the 'argument from design'. 'The teleological argument begins from the fact that the natural world appears to exhibit order or design and infers that its cause must therefore be an intelligent designer.'¹⁵

For the Christian this is the most persuasive of the theistic proofs for God's existence. It suggests that there is a definite link between the order, regularity, design, symmetry and harmony found within the universe and an Intelligent Designer, who is himself a Being of order, regularity, symmetry and harmony.

There is too much complexity in every form of organic and inorganic; fauna and flora; and in the construction of the human body, nervous system, organs - such as the human eye - and especially the brain simply to write it all off to the chance concatenation or linkage due to the element of 'chance' in evolution.

Take for example the discovery of a lost city in the Amazonian jungle. After months, or perhaps years, the whole city has been cleared of all jungle undergrowth, the trees, vines, grass, bushes, the broken masonry repaired, the houses and water tunnels cleaned out, the temple restored, the various objects such as clay pots, knives fashioned from jade, eating utensils cleaned and ready to be exhibited.

Would anybody suggest that this vast architectural complex just ‘happened by chance’ to come into existence? The houses, streets, water tunnels, temple, massive blocks, eating utensils, the entire layout of the city with houses and streets and paving all ‘came together by chance’ in a regular ordered pattern? That no superior, human intelligence formed and fashioned and built it and cemented and carved and constructed all that has been discovered!?! The answer is obvious.

Yet when we come to the truly miraculous designs and patterns and laws in the universe are we so foolish as to dismiss it all as something that happened by chance!?! Truly, the fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no God’ (Psalm 14:1).

Conclusion

Romans 1:20,21 tells us plainly of the sovereign power of a personal creator. Yet this testimony is subverted and suppressed because of the Adamic, fallen, sinful nature of man.

In our reasoning with sinners we should proclaim the character of God as omnipotent creator, the God of providence who controls everything and who has shown kindness by giving us rain from heaven and crops in their seasons (Acts 14:15-17). The Holy Spirit witnesses to that truth in their souls. However intriguing scientific arguments may seem to us we do not try to prove God by those arguments. At the same time we assert and apply the moral law, the ten commandments, as God’s standard. These are revealed absolute truths. Set in every person is a conscience which bears witness to the truth (Romans 2:12-16).

These are our presuppositions. They are not merely important. They are essential. They are vital.

Footnotes

- ¹ D M Lloyd-Jones, *Faith on Trial*, IVP, 1965, p29.
- ² J M Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, Presbyterian and Reformed, 1987, p83. Italics mine.
- ³ Frame, op.cit. p45.
- ⁴ C Van Til, *A Christian Theory of Knowledge*, Presbyterian and Reformed, 1969, p12.
- ⁵ Frame, op.cit. p45.
- ⁶ R C Sproul, J Gerstner, A Lindsley, *Classical Apologetics*, Zondervan, 1984, p212.
- ⁷ Frame, op.cit. p130.
- ⁸ D M Lloyd-Jones, *Romans, An Exposition of Chapter 8:5-17, The Sons of God*, Banner of Truth, 1974, p178.
- ⁹ Sproul, op.cit. p212.
- ¹⁰ C Van Til, *In Defence of the Faith*, vol 2, ‘A Survey of Christian Epistemology’, Presbyterian and Reformed, second edition, nd, p205.
- ¹¹ Eifion Evans, *Daniel Rowland and the Great Evangelical Awakening in Wales*, Banner of Truth, 1985, pp50-51.
- ¹² Bantam Press, second printing 1990, pp16ff.
- ¹³ Sproul, op.cit. p121.
- ¹⁴ P Davies, *Superforce - The Search for a GUT of Nature*, Unwin Paperbacks, 1984, p5. Italics mine.
- ¹⁵ Evans, op.cit. p60.

Unity among Reformed Baptists

* Cassettes for all nine sessions are available at £2.50 each post free from Carey Conference Cassettes, Crag House Farm, Smithy Lane, LEEDS LS16 7NH

A high standard of ministry characterised the first Grace/Carey Conference at Swanwick attended by 200. Grace Assembly is open to men and women as was this conference, which had as its theme *Christian Unity*.

One session was devoted to The International Scene.* Some aspects have been selected and are described in the News section.* Another session, *The Scene at Home*,* introduced by Brian Keen, pastor of Whittlesey Baptist Church, Cambridgeshire, provided news of Reformed Baptist churches in Britain.

Descriptions were given of the work in Kent by Peter Howell of Folkstone; Lincolnshire by James McLatchey; the North West by Peter Day; and Northern Ireland by Stephen Curry. Kent is typical of several counties in Britain and we aim to focus in RT 135 on Kent and at the same time share with our readers something of the passionate appeal made by Peter Howell.

Our churches are hardly viable if they are not effective in evangelism. Dr John Benton, pastor of Chertsey Street Baptist Church, Guildford, and editor of *Evangelicals Now*, addressed the subject, The local church an antidote to hit and run evangelism.* He concluded with a description of the kind of people in contemporary society who are in special need for whom our churches should cater. That too deserves a separate article.



Conference secretary John Rubens with his wife Patricia

From the resultant storehouse of profitable materials I will select some recollections, but will major on Bunyan since we are short of biographical material in this issue.

John Bunyan (1628-1688)

The conference began with *A Biography of John Bunyan** by Geoff Thomas, pastor of Alfred Place Baptist Church, Aberystwith. Bunyan came from a deprived and tough background. By a bequest of the Lord Mayor of London he was able to go to school and so became the first in his family to become literate. At the age of 16 he joined the army. Like his father before him he became a tinker carrying round the country with him his anvil and equipment which weighed 60 pounds. When he married he said they did not have a dish or spoon between them. But his wife owned two evange-

lical books which Bunyan read avidly. His conversion consisted of a protracted, desperate spiritual battle, up one day and then down to the depths the next, over and over again. Various factors were used to draw him.

From his portrait we note he was every inch a man. He looked more like a Cavalier than a Roundhead. Look at that dashing appearance and that moustache!

After his conversion he began preaching. An early powerful influence was made on him when in the army through listening to a preacher named Hobson who signed the 1644 Baptist Confession of Faith. Evidently a powerful experimental preacher Hobson insisted, 'He and he only is fit to preach the gospel who enjoys Christ.'

Bunyan began early to put his sermons into writing. His work as an author was successful from the start. Altogether his works consist of 56 books or studies. These have been recently republished in three large volumes by the Banner of Truth. When Bunyan was 30 his wife died leaving four children to be cared for including Mary, their eldest, who was blind.

Immediately Charles II came to the throne in 1660 persecution began for Non-conformists. Bunyan was arrested and imprisoned for preaching. He was in prison at various times for twelve years altogether. No other Christian of that period suffered longer imprisonment than Bunyan.

Prison was his university. Bunyan who only owned about a dozen books had written 25 books before he wrote *The Pilgrim's Progress*. After the Bible Bunyan's *Progress* remains the world's best selling book having been translated into over 200 languages with innumerable children's editions.

Geoff Thomas quoted Bernard Shaw's eulogising of Bunyan at the expense of Shakespeare. 'None of Shakespeare's characters are believers in life, enjoy life, think life is worth living. Shakespeare's characters are of his own imagination. They have no faith, no hope, no courage, no conviction, no heroic qualities. But Bunyan is heroic. He speaks of a road at the end of which a man might find the celestial city and then say these words, "Though it is with great difficulty I have got hither, now I do not repent me of all the trouble to arrive where I am."' Concludes Shaw: 'The heart vibrates like a bell when it hears words like that.'

The common people heard Bunyan gladly. No other preacher was so much for the common people: theologically, passionately, fiercely. In this respect there was no one like him until Spurgeon.

Bunyan's great friend was the Prince of the Puritans, the learned John Owen. He preached in no other London pulpit more than Owen's. Crowds flocked to hear him wherever he preached.

Christian Unity

Walter Chantry, author of several books, has pastored Grace Baptist Church, Carlisle, Pennsylvania, since 1963. Taking Ephesians 4:1-3 as his basic passage for exposition he twice addressed the theme of *Christian Unity*.* He explained that Christian unity is created by the Holy Spirit. It is not man-made. Our responsibility therefore is to keep the unity which has been given. He likened unity to a city which can be attacked through two gates, the gate of truth and the gate of love.

Concerning the first he asserted that Christian unity is a unity in the truth. It is the truth which binds us together. 'Do not think that there is going to be unity

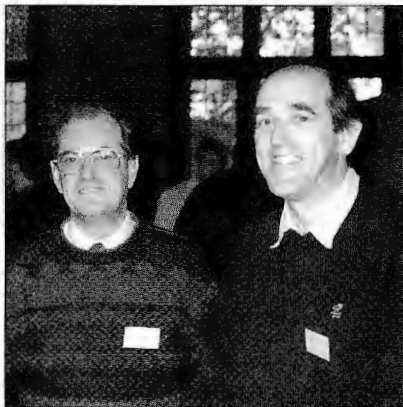
by laying aside various aspects of truth.' Nothing will do more to preserve unity than a full exposition of the whole counsel of God. The revival of the doctrines of grace has enhanced and strengthened our unity and was basic to our conference. The second gate by which Satan enters is the gate of love. Division comes when the rule of love is unheeded. Christians divide over injuries. Hence the exhortation so clearly expressed by the apostle, 'With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering forbearing one another in love'; the adjective, all, means with the highest degree of these graces of love, humility and gentleness and with every practical application imaginable.

Several examples were described of instances when we need to speak the truth in love. One was the coming into our churches of believers who have never been taught the doctrines of grace and have never faced some of the subjects which are part of our lives. For them it is essential that we speak the truth with love, gentleness and patience.

Psalm 110

Baruch Maoz, pastor of Grace and Truth Christian Assembly, Rishon LeTzion, Israel was the other visiting speaker. His work is described in the News section. Two subjects were expounded, Christ in *Colossians** and *Psalm 110*.* *Colossians* comes alive when we understand the reasons that inspired it. These reasons were clearly presented as was the relevance of the epistle for us today. The cassette is recommended.

In introducing Psalm 110 Pastor Maoz pointed out that the form is poetic, a literary mode evoking our imagination. It does what detailed analysis cannot. It was refreshing to hear exposition straight from the Hebrew text. Baruch offered us his own translation as he proceeded.



David Steere (left), pastor of Fressingfield Baptist Church and John Benton. David is due to travel round the world this year. He plans to use this opportunity to encourage members of IFRB.

The LORD solemnly declared to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet." The LORD will extend the sceptre of your mightiness from Zion. Rule with a strong hand among your enemies. Your people, decorated with the beauties of holiness, will offer themselves liberally in the day you enlist your army. As the morning comes forth wet from the womb of darkness, so you have the dew of youthful vigour. The LORD has sworn and will not change his oath, you are a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek. God is at your right hand, he will shatter kings in his anger, he will execute his rule over the nations in the midst of many slain, he will smash the heads of great countries, he will drink from a river on the way and therefore will he lift up his head.

The Carey Conference for Ministers

The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire

5-7 January 1994

Visiting Speaker: Dr Robert Godfrey
President of Westminster Theological Seminary, California

Theme: **The Grace of Law**

Application forms from
John Rubens, 22 Leith Road, Darlington, Co Durham DL3 8BQ

Standing in the breach

The conference concluded on a high note when Bob Sheehan, pastor of The Evangelical Church, Welwyn took as his theme *Moses Standing in the Breach** (Psalm 106:23).

There is a great challenge for us to stand in the breach and plead for our corrupt generation. Today's rotten state of affairs is similar to that scene of the golden calf. We were reminded of Wesley when he came to Newcastle. The place was in a terrible state of sin. Wesley's response was, 'This place is ripe for the gospel!'

The threats which face the Evangelicals in Britain were outlined. There is the confidence of Cardinal Basil Hume who believes the time has come for the Roman Catholic Church to recapture Britain for the papacy. Then there is the arrogance of Islam, some Muslims speaking as though they have already taken over. There is the danger of modernism which has destroyed so many denominations and churches. But the greatest danger lies within the evangelical constituency, a danger in which too many have lost confidence in the gospel itself. Many look for something more exciting than the gospel, something that can be added to the gospel. Do we believe in the power of the gospel?

Among the illustrations used was that of

Phinehas recorded in Numbers 25. When others stood by passively in the face of flagrant fornication, unhappy and grieved, but not one of them prepared to take any action, Phinehas took a spear, entered the tent and drove it through both the brazen adulterer and his Midianite lover. He was commended for his action because he had the honour of Jahweh at heart.

Tellingly a further illustration was used, namely Herodotus' description of the invasion of the Persians who were gaining the upper hand universally. The Greek army was breaking up because of the soldiers' defection. Then came the battle at Thermopolis when Leonidas determined to stand together with 300 Spartans who would rather die than turn their backs on the enemy. In a way which will be acclaimed by historians to the end of time they stood their ground and tenaciously fought thousands of the mighty Persian army. Where are Spartan Christians today who will determine to stand and fight?

Bob Sheehan suggests that the problem is our lack of confidence in the gospel to save sinners. But there is every reason to have confidence in the power of God to use the gospel in a saving way. Do we believe in the gospel that has saved us? We surely do. So let us share the gospel for the salvation of others.

Project Timothy in Kenya



David Ellis with a group of pastors in Kenya

A Report by Pastor David Ellis, Cuckfield Baptist Church, W Sussex

The background

The Christian Brotherhood Churches in Kenya were founded in 1952 as a break-away from the African Brotherhood Church which, I understand, was organised on episcopalian lines of church government. The issues at the time were twofold, namely the ordination of women to the ministry and the doctrine of the autonomy of the local church. 'Bishop' Willington Buliba Sakwa took a stand and the new church met in the open between two tall trees in a small village named Ibinda in the hills of the western provinces of Kenya. The churches have grown to seventy-eight in number and count some forty pastors and evangelists. They are altogether African and western influence has been rather more indirect than by the actual presence of white missionaries among them. The vast majority of the pastors have had no formal training for the ministry but have grown up among the churches and been sent out by them. They are consequently full of zeal for the gospel but not always well instructed in the doctrine or in a clear understanding of the Scriptures. However, in his faithfulness God has kept them in the way of truth though they need to be taught more exactly the Word of God.

Almost four years ago one of the pastors from Nakuru, Geoffrey Buliba, came to the Carey Family Conference at Ripon and during his stay in this country spent part of his time in Sussex with several families of Cuckfield Baptist Church. On his return to Kenya contact was maintained and an invitation was repeatedly extended to come to Kenya to teach the men there. Having been encouraged by reports of on-the-spot training in expository preaching given by equipped men from this country to foreign nationals in their own context at the Evangelical Ministry Assembly in London we too felt that the opening in Kenya afforded us the opportunity to do this. This assembly had launched what came to be known as 'Project Timothy' based on 2 Timothy 2:2 through a paper given by Trevor Archer of Chessington Evangelical Church. The Cuckfield church rose to the challenge, gave us leave to go and financed the major part of the trip. A combined gift from Chessington Evangelical Church and the Proclamation Trust was sufficient to enable seventeen pastors to make their way to the region of Webuye to a village called Koromaiti where we had a three-day conference. Several of the men came from as far away as the Tanzanian and Ugandan borders. One brother cycled for sixteen hours to get there while others walked from anything up to fifteen miles distance.

The whole trip was coordinated on the Kenyan side by Keith Underhill of Trinity Baptist Church, Nairobi, who also organised a pastors conference for the latter part of our visit.

The discovery

For Barbara and me every day of this our first ever visit to Africa was filled with discovery. The day after our arrival in Nairobi we were driven to Koromaiti and left with the Buliba family there, in their compound consisting of several houses. For the next eight days we were to live in typical rural fashion. There was something almost idyllic in the lifestyle of a people who have not come to depend on the creature comforts that we take so easily for granted. They are a happy and unworried people. Their homes are mud houses. Everything in them is functional with nothing superfluous. There is no electricity and no running water (this has to be fetched several times a day from a river nearly a mile and a half away). They live in harmony with their livestock and with nature, free from the pollutions that blight our existence. Many of their children had not seen white people before. They survive on what the land produces but otherwise live in poverty. Only a select few can be educated because of lack of funds.

Into this setting the pastors came from various parts of the country. They slept on the floor for the next three nights. Some possessed only the clothes they came in. All were thirsty for the teaching they were about to receive. A few had been to Bible College in Nairobi and I depended on them to interpret for me when I spoke. The purpose of the conference was to encourage all of these men to engage in expounding the Word of God. Their desire to learn knew no bounds.

We underlined the importance of preaching as God's ordained means of saving sinners and sanctifying saints, setting out the principles of exegesis and exposition of portions of the Scriptures. Then they were given texts to meditate upon and eventually to explain how they would go about expounding them. As we got to know each other we were able to be honest in our assessment of abilities. Though some failed in the initial stages, by the time we concluded the conference all had a desire to understand the Bible better in order to be able to instruct their people more clearly. During the three days we had seven sessions of two and a half hours duration each, on average, plus a Sunday service which began at 9.30am and ended around 1.00pm. The pastors all gave testimony to the blessing of God on their coming together. It was the first time they had held a conference and some were meeting for the first time though they had known of each other before. They pleaded with us to return to teach them more and so we must give serious thought and prayer to that request.

The next few days were spent in travel to visit outlying families and to preach at open-air meetings which gathered great crowds. In the blazing heat of the equatorial sun and the imposed necessity of accepting every hospitality from those we visited (to refuse would have been a gross insult), we were constantly aware of the Lord's hand upon us protecting and leading us.

The next step of our journey took us to the town of Nakuru, Kenya's fourth largest. There we encountered an altogether different lifestyle. Living conditions appeared to be far less sanitary than in the mountains yet the people were the same, many seeking to eke out a living to support their families. Nakuru is not immune to the invasion of false prophets and false apostles. Many of the questions we were asked related to 'health and wealth' gossellers and various charismatic-type rogues. There we preached to two churches and had a wonderful reception. Again the great discovery was, on the one hand the faithful persevering work of the pastors in spite of the lack of materials such as commentaries and other helps, and on the other hand the insatiable appetite of the people for truth. This visit has marked us indelibly and has given us a new perspective on so many things.

The vision

After Nakuru we descended on Nairobi by means of public transport, an epic experience in its own right! The discovery we made in Nairobi is worthy of an article on its own.

Keith Underhill, the pastor of Trinity Reformed Baptist Church, had organised a conference at which he and I were to be the speakers. Twenty-four men came together, again many from great distances. All had had some contact with Keith and Trinity Baptist and were instructed in the Word. Some have been following a correspondence course, set up by Keith, for a few years and show the benefits of

what they have been taught. The standard of that course is probably higher than many in this country would receive in some Bible Colleges.

Our great discovery was to realise what a power house for the work of God in Kenya is the church and ministry at Trinity Baptist. A well stocked library of books and an impressive quantity of quality cassettes along with facilities for study and sleeping are some of the tools available for the men who have come under Keith's influence. The amount of work which goes into the preparing, guiding and correcting the studies for these men has got to be seen to be believed.

The pastors' conference was by no means the first which they have organised but it was stimulating and very profitable. Its purpose was to stimulate greater interest in expository preaching and I believe the end was achieved. During three full days we squeezed in twelve sessions of approximately two hours each. Keith led three sessions, two on Grace and one on the 'Health and Wealth' gospel. I dealt with the Primacy of the Preached Word, Principles of Interpretation, two sessions on Expounding the Parables, and one each on The Church Ministering to Itself, Eternal Punishment, and Old Heresies in New Form. There is no lack of vision among these men and they are willing to push themselves to the limits that their people may be instructed in the Word of God. Time for prayer and fellowship was very refreshing and one could not fail to be impressed with the sincerity and the sense of urgency in the pleading of these servants of God. We had opportunity to meet with the church at a prayer-meeting and also to preach the Word to a 180-plus congregation on the Lord's Day morning. We believe we have caught something of their vision for a light has been lit in our hearts by our fellowship with these dear brothers and our brief work among them. Pray with us for them and especially for the Underhill family and Keith's ministry in particular.

The conclusion

The Lord enabled us to preach and teach our beloved brothers in Kenya. Perhaps more importantly he allowed us to learn from them. Their zeal and devotion, their utter commitment to the work of God would put many of us to shame. The willingness to be taught and to put into practice the lessons learnt was almost spontaneous. The difficulties they labour under would weary the best of us and yet they persevere unflinchingly aware that for truth to progress error has to be denounced. We trust that our small contribution will have helped the better to arm these fellow-labourers in our common task. We and they are convinced that the need of the day is for clear preaching of the unadulterated Word of God and the application of such preaching to the lives of men and women.

We have been asked to return by those whom we met and have grown to love in Christ. Our ministry to them was appreciated and, as our Father leads us, we shall return to continue where we left off, 'committing to faithful men that they may be able to teach others also'.

The reports on Malaysia, Israel, Grace Publications Trust and Albania are gleaned from the recent Grace/Carey Conference (May 1993, Swanwick, England).

Malaysia

About half the population of Malaysia is ethnic Malay and Muslim by law; the other half comprises mainly Chinese with Indian and tribal minorities.

Dr Poh Boon Sing spent a year in prison 1987/1988 on the charge of 'Christianising the Malays' and has written a book *Fragments from Kamunting* which consists mostly of letters written to his wife and children from prison. (available from Aigburth Christian Bookshop, 361 Aigburth Road, Liverpool L17 0BP).

Some think of Malaysia as a land of jungle and orang-utangs but Kuala Lumpur is a large, modern, bustling city. The doctrinally insipid evangelicalism prevalent world-wide is found in Malaysia.

After graduating from Liverpool University, Dr Poh returned to Malaysia and was supported by Belvidere Road Church, Liverpool in church planting. In 1983 the first Reformed Baptist church was constituted at Sri Serdang, based on the 1689 Confession.

Kuala Lumpur is now ringed by three Reformed Baptist churches. In addition a church was recently constituted in the North west of the country on the island of Penang with 9 members. Lau Sing



Derek Thomas (left) and Russell Bridges of Leeds Reformed Baptist Church on their return from Pakistan

Foo, who trained at London Theological Seminary and thereafter spent a couple of years back in Malaysia under the Reformed Baptist ministerial training scheme, has been sent with his family to pastor the new church.

A young pastor, Peter Kek, came to the Malaysian Reformed Baptist ministers conference in 1991 and thereafter planted a church in Johore Bahru based on the 1689 Confession of Faith. The Reformed Baptists have several families living in the coastal regions of Sarawak and Sabah, East Malaysia, (comprising parts of the islands of Borneo). In visiting these believers with Peter Kek, Dr Poh tells of an active interest in reaching the tribal peoples in the interior now largely unreached. Some were aggressive head-hunters up till 2 years ago and in some areas there is a history of mission work but the 'churches' are now mainly nominal and traditional. There was a revival in one tribe in the 1970s but fanaticism destroyed much of what was once very

encouraging. There is now a pressing need to re-evangelise.

The Reformed Baptists of Malaysia have a burden for Indonesia where the language is similar to Malay so it is felt that a viable work could be pioneered there. Also Cambodia and Laos are appealing to the Malaysian government for developmental help and it is hoped that when trade missions are established, Christian influence will also spread into these lands. And then not far away is the vast land of China. The Malaysian Reformed Baptists are mostly converted Chinese and many still have relatives in mainland China. Poh points to the fact that as far as he knows there are no RB churches in Taiwan, Hong Kong, or China. They know of one RB man working there. With so many converts and so few teachers in China and the inevitable rise of the cults, the Malaysian RBs have a burden to translate sound Christian books and have them imported into China.

Israel

Baruch Maoz began his church planting work in 1974. In 1983 the church was rent asunder by a schism very similar to that described in the letter to the Galatians. The majority went off and have maintained an ultra-legalistic position, isolated and sectarian. Less than ten remained. The work had virtually to begin again. Today the congregation is about 150 in number, mostly of Russian origin.

The weekly worship service lasts about three hours. The sermon in Hebrew is translated simultaneously into Russian and English. The preacher is interrupted if anything is not clear. There is a question time at the end of the exposition.

Baruch has been involved in the production of 40 books in Hebrew. These include books that are evangelistic in

character. One title, *Jesus was a Jew* (110 pages) has already been depleted. On one day during May, 34 requests for this book were received in response to an advert in the press.

Albania

Pastor Ian McNaughton of Holmbrook Evangelical Church, Coventry reported on a visit to Albania. Following years of atheistic Communism there is a great need for literature on the subject of creationism. He made an appeal for Sylvia Baker's book *A Bone of Contention* to be published in Albanian. So far £500 has been received in gifts. £3,000 will be needed. Gifts should be sent to John Rubens EP, 12 Wooler Street, Darlington DL1 1RQ.

Grace Publications Trust

This work was described by Philip Grist in an article in RT 123 (*The World Through Literature*). Various items, commentaries, correspondence courses and Great Christian Classics have been translated into other languages. Altogether 30 languages have been involved. The most popular title so far is Jeremiah Burroughs' *The Divine Art of Christian Contentment* translated into ten languages including Persian, Indonesian, Arabic, Urdu and Xhosa. It is the latter that has enjoyed the most success.

Macedonia

Neil and Leah Hulse report the joy of renewed fellowship with Branko Trajkovski: during a visit to Greece we travelled north to the new Republic of Macedonia and were met by Branko at the border which is very near the town of Bitola.

At every turn it was evident that here was a brother committed to his people. Living in Bitola, Branko is constantly working



Branko, left, and Neil, standing in an early fifth century baptistry at Heraclea Lynkestis, Macedonia

at ways of communicating the gospel to a needy population living under spiritual oppression. In this harsh spiritual climate there are only a handful of believers in Bitola, yet through persistent witness to 'our great God and Saviour' there are those who have come into new life. One young brother in the Lord, together with Branko, has bought a plot of land in an outlying village where they grow fruit and vegetables (Their morello cherry juice was greatly enjoyed!).

Branko has won the respect of his neighbours by working hard with his hands. He is very generous with what is produced. He has also planted gardens around the flats where there would otherwise have been barrenness. He genuinely loves helping those around him practically and has built up a warm rapport and friendship with his neighbours.

We need to pray for the people of the Balkans who have so often been battered, so often been uprooted, and who desperately need 'a city with a firm foundation'.

Pakistan

Russell Bridges, assistant pastor of Leeds Reformed Baptist Church, recently completed two weeks of ministry in Pakistan, standing in for Erroll Hulse who, on account of a viral infection, had to withdraw. Having had the opportunity with Pastor Derek Thomas of Stranmillis Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Belfast of ministering to 150 pastors of various denominations, Russell returned much encouraged. It was heartening to find that 26 Presbyterian churches in Karachi, although very poor and oppressed, have a positive attitude and are growing. There is urgent need for good literature in Urdu.

Objections to Immersion Answered

Part 3 (Parts 1 & 2 appeared in RT132 and RT 133)

Tom Wells

Objection 6: Baptism pictures the pouring out of the Spirit.

As I have said earlier, it is hard to find writers before the 19th century who object to immersion. As the number of more recent objectors has grown, however, greater emphasis has been laid on an argument we have not yet considered. Briefly, it is this: water baptism is a type of which Holy Spirit baptism is the antitype. Since we know that the Spirit is poured out in Spirit baptism, we can see that unity between type and antitype demands that water baptism be by pouring.¹

Here, for example, are the words of Rayburn (pp15-17):

Most immersionists do not understand that one important reason affusionists differ with them as to the mode of baptism is that they *differ very strongly as to what water baptism symbolises!* The immersionist argues vehemently that baptism symbolizes death, burial and resurrection with Jesus Christ...

Our God has ordained that the work of both persons of the Godhead, so essential to our salvation, should be kept strikingly before the Church... This is done in the two ordinances which he has established, the Lord's Supper and water baptism... As the supper symbolises the work of Christ, so *baptism symbolises the work of the Holy Spirit.* (Italics throughout are his.)

To bolster this argument, Rayburn and others have rightly pointed out that according to Paul there is 'one baptism' (Eph 4:5). But, they say, if water baptism symbolises the death and resurrection of Christ, and not the baptism of the Holy Spirit, we clearly have not one baptism but two. On the other hand, if water baptism symbolises Spirit baptism we have the simple unity of type and antitype.

Clearly here is a challenging argument, based on Scripture, that ought not to be shrugged off.

Let us note first that baptism may represent more things than it pictures. To make my point clear, let me illustrate what I mean. An American penny represents several things. For example, it represents purchasing power (though not much these

days!); it also represents the government of the USA. But it does not picture these things. It pictures Abraham Lincoln on one side and the Lincoln Memorial building on the other.

It seems likely that the same thing is true of baptism. In commenting on Acts 1:5, John Calvin lists several things that baptism represents. He writes, 'Baptism is entitled the laver of regeneration (Titus 3:5) a washing from sin, participation in the death and burial of Christ, and ingrafting into his body (Titus 3:5, Rom 6:4)...'² Calvin was quite aware, in addition, that water baptism and Spirit baptism were closely related. He says, 'So faith draws a true connexion from the external sign' (water baptism) 'to the internal effect' (Spirit baptism). Now it is highly unlikely that any picture could be found that takes in all of these references. It is evident that the Lord, in making baptism a picture, did not use them all. But which one did he use?³

The answer lies in the meaning of the word itself. As we have already seen, there is no objection to taking baptizo in its primary sense, to dip or to immerse. We may readily grant that some other choice might have been made. Without doubt pouring might have pictured the descent of the Spirit and there would be no reason for us to quibble. But the Lord evidently did not choose to do that.

It may be objected, however, that immersion gives little or no meaning to the baptism of the Spirit. Two things, I think, will show that the objection is without weight.

First, it is evident by examining the older English and continental commentators (most of whom practised sprinkling or pouring) that they felt no difficulty at all. For example listen to the German professor of theology, G V Lechler:

The gift of the Spirit is here termed a Baptism, and is thus characterised as one of most abundant fulness, and as a submersion in a purifying and life-giving element.⁴

The editor, Lange, adopts the same understanding in his own commentary on Matthew 3:11. In his homiletical notes on the same text he adds,

Baptism implies a descent into the depths, 1. of self-knowledge; 2. of repentance; 3. of renunciation of the world; 4. of self-surrender to the grace of the Lord.

Whatever one makes of this, it is evident that Lange felt no difficulty at all in taking immersion as the picture in baptism.

The Englishman Samuel Bloomfield speaking of the force of baptizo in Matthew 3:11 wrote:

The most probable opinion is that of Chrysostom and others of the ancients (sic), that baptisein here, in the sense obruere aliquem re, has reference to the exuberant abundance of those extra-ordinary spiritual gifts soon to be poured forth.⁵

The second thing that shows that immersion in the Spirit is capable of great meaning is this: the picture may be of the abiding effects of the Spirit rather than of the manner in which he comes. In Dagg's words (p65),

Both the promises (the promise of outpouring and the promise of baptism or immersion in the Spirit) were fulfilled on the day of Pentecost; but the two promises exhibit the influence of the Spirit then communicated, in different aspects. In one it is viewed as proceeding from God, and is likened to water poured out; in the other it is viewed as affecting all the powers of the apostles, surrounding and filling them, as water surrounds and imbues substances which are immersed in it.

It is not necessary, however, to insist on any *picture* connected with the Spirit. That baptism with water and with the Spirit are connected is a great truth. But that water baptism *pictures* Spirit baptism is unproven and unnecessary. One picture is sufficient, burial. If one must have an additional picture, any application of water will picture washing. It's not necessary to go beyond that.

Doesn't that leave us with more than one baptism, however? Let's see.

The idea that the *number of baptisms* is in view in Ephesians 4:5 is possible but unlikely. Most exegetes have taken this verse to be about the unity of Christians, not the unity of baptisms. The standard contemporary Greek lexicon lists the word *one* in Ephesians 4:5 as illustrating the meaning *one and the same*.⁶ As Bloomfield explained years ago in discussing Ephesians 4:4ff,

The word *heis* ('one'), repeated throughout this whole passage, signifies, 'one and the same'. For the Apostle is here enumerating every thing in the religion wherein there is a *henotes* ('oneness').

The idea, then, can be paraphrased with the words, 'We all have the same Lord, the same faith and the same baptism.'

The evidence that this is the correct interpretation is found in the scope of the passage. Paul is enforcing and illustrating the command in verse 3, 'Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit...' The oneness exists, he says, now keep it!

In what does it consist? It consists in our being in the same body and having the same Spirit, hope, Lord, faith, baptism and God. With reference to baptism, as Calvin says, 'That one baptism is common to all.'⁷ Paul is not interested in the question, how many baptisms are there? He is concerned to show that the same baptism is shared by all, a baptism in the name of Jesus Christ.⁸

Objection 7: Mode is not important.

As we have seen, most scholars of every denomination have admitted that the mode of baptism was originally immersion. And I have tried to show you the evidence on which this near consensus rests by answering the various objections to immersion.

But just how important is this question? Is it something that should divide Christians? Let me answer these questions in two ways.

First, in general we may say that matters of order and matters of rite and ceremony are genuinely less important than matters of morality and of the central doctrines of the Christian faith, such as the doctrines of God, Christ and salvation. In the Old Testament, God told Israel to forget about their punctilious offering of sacrifice as long as their hearts were far from him. Yet we cannot imagine him saying the opposite: Forget about your hearts being close to Me as long as you fail in your sacrifices! We know instinctively that being close to God-like love and mercy is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices. Let's never forget this in our zeal.

But there is another answer I must also give to the question, how important is the mode of baptism? That answer is this: since the very word baptizo refers to mode, as we have seen, the question itself is meaningless. Put literally it asks, how important is the mode of immersion? The truth is this: baptism and immersion are the same thing. The question, how shall we baptise? meant literally in New Testament times, how shall we immerse?

To answer, we will immerse by sprinkling, is to speak nonsense. Either we will immerse or we will not. There is no middle ground. Notice that I am not entering into the question here whether it is all right to substitute another rite, such as sprinkling or pouring, in cases of emergency. That is a separate question.⁹ But those who introduce sprinkling or pouring in the place of immersion as the normal practice guarantee that no baptism in the New Testament sense of the word takes place. To be a party to this disregard for the ordinance that our Lord left with his church must be a serious matter.

To ask, 'How important is the Lord's command?' when we know what it is and have the power to carry it out, verges on rebellion. I do not say, of course, that

OUR BAPTIST HERITAGE (see Editorial) is divided into four sections: *historical, reformational, pastoral* and *devotional*. The first section describes the development of the 1689 Confession and discusses the meaning of the terms 'Reformed' and 'Puritan'. This chapter is ideal for beginners. David Kingdon's *Independency and Interdependency* forms the reformational section. *Correcting the Offending Brother* by Don Garlington, *The Young Man and his Role Model* by Paul Clarke and *The Preacher's Role Model* by Bill Payne, make up the pastoral section. The book concludes with *The Quest for Revival – Where has the RB movement faltered?* – an issue examined in an exposition of Revelation 2:1-7.

those who differ with me are rebels. Far from it! But I do say that the assumption that 'the mode of baptism' is a matter of little importance is based on ignorance at best.

The word *baptism* asserts mode. That mode is immersion.

References

- ¹ This is not quite the same thing as saying that baptism must be by pouring. Most of those who argue for pouring do not believe that mode is so important that a person should be thought of as unbaptised if he has been immersed. Many of them, in fact, bear witness to the relative unimportance of mode by arguing for pouring while practising sprinkling. Others would argue that pouring and sprinkling are basically the same, since in both cases water is applied to the subject rather than the subject being applied to the water as in immersion.
- ² John Calvin, *The Acts of the Apostles*, reprint ed, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1965, vol 1, p28.
- ³ In using water, of course, there was a built-in suggestion of cleansing also. That would have been true whether he had chosen immersion, pouring or sprinkling. Considering the widespread use of the miqveh in Jewish cleansing, however, immersion is particularly appropriate to the Jews' own practice.
- ⁴ In John Peter Lange, *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*, reprinted, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1960, in loc.
- ⁵ S T Bloomfield, *He Kaine Diatheke*. The Greek Testament with *English Notes*, fourth edition, Longman, London, 1841, vol 1, p14. The Latin quotation means to *overwhelm, sink or bury something*. Note the perfectly possible connection between baptism and burial here.
- ⁶ William F Arndt and F Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1957, p230.
- ⁷ John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1948, p269.
- ⁸ Hendriksen adopts the paraphrase of E F Scott, 'It is better to take the whole sentence as expressive of a single fundamental fact: "one Lord in whom we all believe and in whose name we have been baptised".' See William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of Ephesians*, Baker, Grand Rapids, 1967, p187.
- ⁹ I fear, however, that the question of emergency baptisms treats baptism as more necessary than the New Testament treats it. While Baptists have written a great deal on the subject of baptism, so that the uninformed might suppose that for them it is a matter of life and death, Baptists have also emphasised that regeneration is a mark of grace and that men are justified only by faith in Jesus Christ. 'Emergency baptisms' are important to those who suspect or assert that baptism has more to do with making men right with God than Baptists have generally admitted.

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