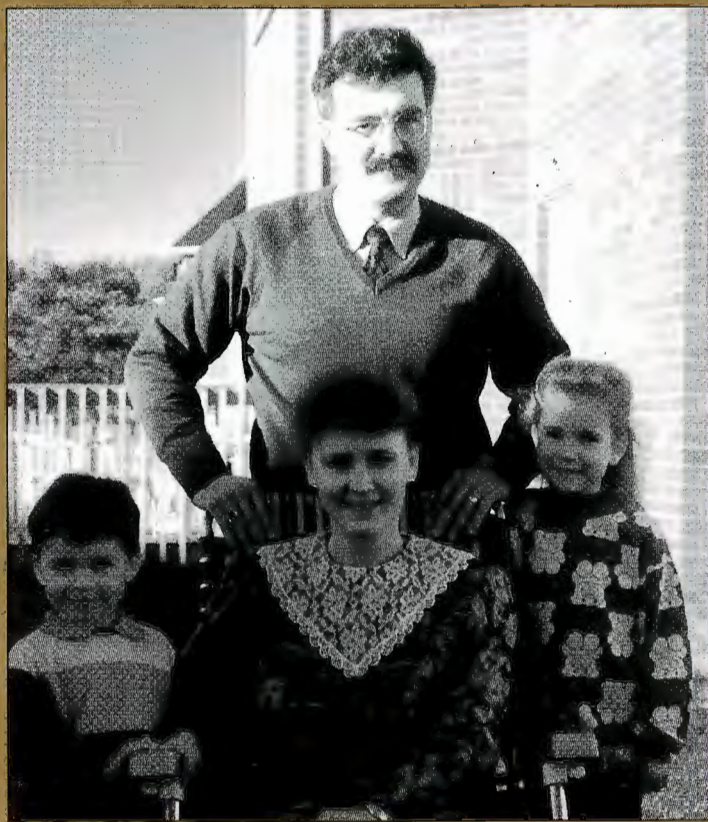


---

# REFORMATION TODAY



JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1995

143

---



Dr Mark Dever

## The Westminster Conference

About 260 attended the annual two day Westminster Conference at Westminster Chapel, Buckingham Gate, London, 13th-14th December, 1994.

Dr Mark Dever who is minister of the Capitol Hill Baptist Church, Washington D.C., USA, addressed the subject of *William Tyndale and Justification by Faith*. His brief was to concentrate in particular on Tyndale's answer to Sir Thomas More. We were impressed by the precious nature of justification. That doctrine was skilfully woven together with biographical detail. Tyndale, who gave England the Bible, was born 1496 and martyred at Vilvorde in Belgium in 1536. He is England's greatest Reformation hero.

Philip Eveson who teaches in the London Theological Seminary explained modern views of justification. His survey of the Council of Trent and its edicts was masterly. He sternly warned that scholars Tom Wright, James Dunn and Alistair McGrath must be watched because of the danger of giving a wider meaning to the

concept of *righteousness* and thereby reducing or fatally compromising the central doctrine of justification. The meaning of *righteousness* is explored in Don Garlington's articles (RT 141 - 143). There is wide biblical reference for righteousness. It is important to interpret its meaning precisely as we find it in Scripture, no more and no less. There is no reason to threaten forensic justification in the process.

*The Puritan Woman* was the title of the paper by John Marshall. This was a highlight of the Conference. How refreshing to hear about the other half of the story! Puritan wives matched their husbands in piety and character. The most striking feature in the paper was to hear how God's love predominated in Puritan family life.

Dr Gareth Crossley presented material of great practical value: *The Puritans and Melancholy* (Depression). He described the scene today and perceptively illustrated the helpfulness of the Puritan approach for today.

*The Puritans and the Direct Operations of the Holy Spirit* was presented by Chris Bennett of Hounslow. It was seen clearly that the Puritans did not rule out direct operations of the Holy Spirit. The Conference concluded with a biography of Adoniram Judson pioneer missionary to Burma which included a review of Burma (Myanmar) today, and the urgent need for missionaries of Judson's dedication.

When published these carefully researched papers form a timeless and valuable resource. Past volumes are available at exceptionally reasonable prices. Details, including the programme for next year, can be obtained from John Harris, 8 Back Knowl Road, MIRFIELD, West Yorks, WF14 9SA.

---

*Front cover: Prof Michael Haykin with his wife Alison and children Victoria and Nigel. Prof Haykin's 352 page book One Heart and One Soul, John Sutcliff of Olney, his friends and his times is published by EP, and is due in January, 1995. Contemporary of William Carey and Andrew Fuller, Sutcliff's name is linked with Samuel Pearce and John Ryland.*

---

---

# Editorial

---

---

The Roman Catholic Church in the British Isles, during November and December 1994, was shaken to its foundations by scandals involving cover-up of scandalous sins. Neglect of discipline has been the cause of immense pain for the victims of sex abuse. One such cover-up operation actually resulted in the fall of the Irish Government in Dublin. If discipline had been applied immediately damage to many individuals would have been avoided and disgrace circumvented.

While we may be a long way from the Roman Catholic Church, these observations serve to remind us of the need to be watchful. Evangelicals are by no means free from tragic falls into sin. There is the temptation of leaders to cover up cases where discipline should be applied. It is a sure sign of corruption where those who wield the power use it to defend the guilty, bully into silence those who are the victims and persecute those who call for justice.

## **Maintaining discipline in the churches**

It is timely that this subject be expounded in detail. In some churches discipline has broken down inasmuch as no attempt is made to keep an up-to-date church register. A further extension of such breakdown is seen when non-attending members fall into sin and the issues are ignored. Pastors called to such churches face a mammoth task of reformation. I know of a pastor who confronted a member who was living in adultery. The offender responded with defiance and threats: 'If you take action against me there are five other cases like mine and you will bring the church down!' In the event all of them were disciplined. The church was purified. It did not fall apart. It has subsequently grown and sustains a fine testimony.

## **The lack of inter-church unity and cooperation**

Churches which have no connectionalism, no formal union with other churches and no meaningful association with other assemblies, lack a court of appeal in instances of the abuse of church power in discipline. This means that those unfairly excommunicated are left without recourse. The injury inflicted can be very grievous. Every effort should be made to correct unbiblical independency. (See 'Independency and Interdependency' by David Kingdon in *Our Baptist Heritage*, published by RTT and Chapel Library, USA.)

It should also be noted that discipline necessitated by the fall of a pastor into sin can be overwhelming for a local church to handle alone. In a recent case a Presbyterian pastor was greatly helped inasmuch as the synod dealt well with a tragic situation. The Presbyterian system can be excellent but if the leaders are evil the system can be turned on its head (see second paragraph on page 1).

The lack of unity and cooperation of local churches often nullifies the discipline of a local church for the simple reason that the offender simply finds another assembly which will accept him with no questions asked. Often this leads to a repetition of the sin and further damage.

### **The problem of lifeless members**

The article *Maintaining Discipline in the Church* does not grapple with the problem of lifeless members. How must discipline be applied to non-participating, uninterested members? This is a difficulty which faces Presbyterians as well as Baptists. Where is there an evangelical church, large or small, which does not have the perplexity of some members who sustain the lowest possible level of visibility? There are members who never attend a prayer meeting and who rarely if ever attend the Lord's Table.

Should lifeless or seemingly dead members be removed from the church registry without reference to church discipline as such? It can be argued that if there is spiritual life it may be stirred by the application of church discipline. The quotation from James Bannerman, highlighted in the article, is helpful. Membership is voluntary. We are not living under sacralism in which all are coerced to church. Many of the churches of the Reformation, by reason of their inclusiveness, were vitiated by what Verduin describes as conductual-averagism, no evidence of spiritual life in the members (*The Reformers and their Stepchildren*, page 95ff, see review).

The conditions of membership in an evangelical church should be clearly spelled out from the beginning. With love and deep concern, those who promise to be faithful and then fall back and are careless ought to be remonstrated with concerning their commitment and their lukewarmness. Surely discipline should be applied if there is no response. Some churches (Salisbury Baptist Church led by pastor Malcolm Watts is an example) sustain 'a covenant of unity'. From the outset all members pledge to renew their covenant together publicly once a year [see article in *Reformation Today* 88].

---

---

# Maintaining Discipline in the Church

---

---

Erroll Hulse<sup>1</sup>

The practice of discipline is essential to the life of a Christian church. By its very nature, a church consists of those who have been called out of the world to become members of the body of Christ. At the time when Paul wrote of his first letter to the Corinthians, the church at Corinth appears to have been the most disorderly, badly behaved, thoroughly scandalous church of those times. It is not surprising therefore to find that in his opening sentence, the apostle provides a definition of the very nature of what a church is.

A church consists of sinners called out of the world into a living union with Christ. The very word church (*ekklēsia* – *ek* out of [literally, a calling out], *klētos* [adjective] called) reminds the readers that this calling is to holiness of life, a life consistent with living union with the Son of God.

Such holiness of life involves constant discipline. The word discipline is derived from the Latin verb, *disco*, I learn. Hence the term ‘disciple’ or ‘learner’. The members are disciplined as learners. Both their incorporation into the body of the church and their continuation as practising members of the church involves the discipline of the Christian life.<sup>2</sup>

Historically the marks or characteristics of a true church are:

1. The preaching of the Word,
2. The maintaining of discipline, and
3. The ordinances of baptism and church membership.

It will help us to grasp the necessity of church discipline if we look at the subject in three parts:

- 1. Formative**
- 2. Preventative**
- 3. Corrective**

---

1. From a paper given at the Carey Ministers’ Conference, January 1994

2. The Greek word for sanctified in this opening sentence to the Corinthians (*ēgiasmenois*) is a perfect passive, *having been sanctified*. It is a reference to positional or definitive sanctification, something that has taken place once and for all but which has ongoing ramifications.

## 1. Formative

If we follow the example of the formation of the Church at its very beginning in the New Testament, we see that repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ are followed by baptism and church membership. The latter consisted of devotion to the apostles' teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayers.

A church consists of a gathered, orderly body. Entrance is voluntary. It is not forced. New members must be given to understand the terms of membership. It is known that some churches in America require a written agreement that if church discipline is applied for immorality or scandalous sin, there will not be recourse to civil action against the church.

The decision as to what qualifies as a credible profession of faith involves the use of the keys of the kingdom (Matt 16:19) – keys to shut out or shut in. This responsibility of inclusion and exclusion is awesome and momentous. We dare not shut out weak believers, depriving them of the benefits of church membership, yet we must seek to preserve the Church from the damage done by false professions.

The high level of spiritual power exercised by the Holy Spirit and the biblical understanding possessed by the proselytes at Pentecost explain why baptism could be immediate. Later in the development of the Church more time was taken. We do need time to assess the testimony of those who apply for church membership. The new applicants also need a period of learning and preparation. This will go a long way to correct the scandal of having a back door as large as the front door, that is, defections as numerous as the entries. This applies especially in many Southern Baptist churches where easy believism is the order of the day and baptism is administered prematurely with disastrous spiritual consequences. Yet on the other hand care must be taken not to raise the standards above what the NT requires. If the principle of preparation and testing is pressed too far the Church could become a body exclusively for spiritual spartans.

## 2. Preventative

In the medical world it is universally recognised that preventative medicine is the best medicine. It is much easier for doctors to treat illnesses and save lives when the symptoms are discovered early. The same principle applies in spiritual care. The ongoing responsibility of church elders is to lead in the work of promoting edification, growth in grace, knowledge, love and unity (1 Pet 5:1-4). All the members should be encouraged to participate and bond together in this way (see 1 Cor 12:1-28; Eph 2:21,22; 4:1-3; 11-16; Phil 2:1-5; Col 3:12-17; Heb 10:19-38), contributing to the life of the body with the variety of gifts they have been given (Rom 12:3-8; Eph 4:12).

*There is a spiritual efficacy in this power of discipline and there are spiritual results flowing from it, which no mere natural right belonging to any society can confer, and which nothing but the authority and virtue of a Divine institution can give.*

James Bannerman, *The Church of Christ*, vol 2 pp 186-200.

Consistent and regular visiting of the members in their homes by elders for the express purpose of spiritual nurture and growth will help greatly in the early diagnosis of spiritual backsliding or defection. It is almost impossible for a pastor to care for a large membership on his own and fellow elders should be encouraged as they are able, without neglecting their own families, to assist.

Necessary for the maintenance of preventative discipline is the keeping up to date of the church register. It is practical that one of the elders be entrusted with this work which should include keeping records needed for the transfer of members and receiving members from other churches.

### **3. Corrective**

It is clear from Scripture that the exercise of corrective discipline is not optional but mandatory. To refrain from disciplining a member guilty of scandalous sin is in itself a corporate sin for the entire church, as the apostle makes plain in 1 Corinthians 5:1-13. The reason is clear. The toleration of scandalous sin implicates the whole body, all the members thereby being tarnished as though such sin were acceptable.

Failure to maintain discipline for scandalous sin devalues the church and the gospel in the eyes of the watching world.

It is important to note that the apostle defines what he means by scandalous sin. You must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother who is sexually immoral, greedy, an idolater, a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler (1 Cor 5:11). The latter description of scandalous sins is not exhaustive. It does not refer to heresy-mongering and divisiveness which is censured in Romans 16:17. Needless to say there is a world of difference between freedom to differ on innumerable issues and malicious divisiveness over an issue which destroys the gospel. The Corinthians were party minded and divided into camps over issues that should never divide the body.

The provision of the formula of Matthew 18:15-17 indicates our Lord's intention that discipline be maintained in his Church. Personal offences are to be put right

between members and if no satisfaction is obtained then the matter should be brought before the assembly. Matthew 18:15-17 is one of many references indicating that individual Christians should submit themselves to church membership. Some avoid this on account of bad experiences or abuse of power. The fear of abuse is legitimate and points to the need for constant reformation of the churches.

### **Objections To Corrective Discipline**

I will list some of the best-known objections.

Does not the Scripture say that love hides a multitude of sins? Is it not better to labour to cover up sordid or disgraceful sins? By the exercise of discipline for scandalous sin great harm will be done to the people involved and their families. Is it not better to keep these matters secret?

This reasoning is very common and the answer to these objections is that the honour and glory of God must be kept in view. When that is not maintained the damage done to everyone is even greater. Far from the matter being kept secret, offence increases and spreads pervasively with accumulated damage, because the matter was not handled in a biblical fashion immediately.

Corrective discipline lends itself to the abuse of authoritarianism. Are we not much better off without it? Abuse should be avoided and we will look at this in more detail presently.

Corrective discipline is a sure recipe for misunderstanding, unpleasantness and division in the church. Are we not much better off without it? The considerations which follow demonstrate the importance of over-ruling objections of this kind.

### **Reasons Why the Maintenance of Church Discipline is Essential**

#### *The glory and holiness of God*

The Lord our God intends that his Church bear a testimony to his holiness and justice in this fallen, depraved world. For this reason Israel was chosen to be a holy people. When Israel fell into idolatry, unfaithfulness and apostasy she herself became the subject of discipline before the whole world. Israel forfeited the rich blessings uttered from Mount Gerizim and incurred the terrible curses of Mount Ebal. This discipline was witnessed by the surrounding nations when Jerusalem was besieged and destroyed and the people taken into the captivity of Babylon.

The Lord himself disciplined his people when they were disobedient and rebellious in their wilderness wanderings. When they came into the land of Canaan, Achan and his family disobeyed the express command of the Lord not to steal booty. Public discipline in the death penalty was applied to Achan and his family.



It is clear from the judgment on Ananias and Sapphira, who were guilty of lying to God, that discipline is to be maintained in the New Testament Church. Great fear came upon the Church as a result of this direct act of discipline from the Lord.

It can be argued that if holiness is not found in the Church of Christ then where in the world will it be found?

#### *Avoiding the displeasure of Christ*

The future blessing and prosperity of any church depends on the favour of our Triune Lord. Nowhere is this principle more clearly seen than in the letters addressed to the seven churches of Asia Minor. Our Lord makes it plain that it is imperative that heart sins, wrong teaching, the toleration of immorality and sheer lukewarmness are to be corrected. The very future of the church at Ephesus depended on corrective action being taken (Rev 2:5), while the church at Thyatira is warned of direct, severe judgment unless they exercised discipline in the case of the immorality of Jezebel.

#### *The preservation of the purity, doctrine and worship of the Church*

As we have seen from the case of immorality in the church at Corinth the purity and the holiness of the Church must be preserved. All the members should know when they join the church that discipline will be maintained. In addition to the case of immorality, the church at Corinth was required to correct evil behaviour, even drunkenness, at the Lord's Table. Reference is made to the intervention of the Lord himself in severe judgment upon offenders, a judgment which may have been averted had proper procedures been applied by the believers at Corinth.

The doctrine of the Church must be safeguarded. Romans 16:17 and Titus 3:10 indicate that measures must be taken when necessary to preserve the Church from heresy within its own ranks. In similar vein a local church is to be preserved from itinerant teachers who are heretical (Gal 1:9; 2 Jn 10,11).

#### *To reclaim offenders*

At every stage of application, church discipline is designed to restore the offender. Corrective discipline procedures are given by God and designed by him as a means of grace to bring spiritual restoration to those who are truly his children.

#### *To deter others from sin*

There is no doubt about the fact that we all need to be reminded about the terrible and destructive nature of sin and thereby be strengthened in our hatred of it and our determination to resist temptation to sin. When standards of holiness are upheld this has a sobering effect as we read in Acts, 'And great fear seized all who heard what had happened' (Acts 2:7). Those who sin are to be rebuked publicly, so that others may take warning (1 Tim 5:20).

### *To uphold the honour and integrity of the Church*

When church officers choose to follow the way of expediency and condone, ignore or by-pass flagrant sin they bring disrepute not only on the Lord but on themselves and the church they represent. It is often observed that sins which go uncorrected emerge again with greater severity.

### **The General Procedure for Church Discipline**

The responsibility and authority to maintain discipline rests with the elders of the local church. It is their duty to find out the truth of a matter and only when there is irrefutable proof to proceed with discipline. In applying discipline, the outline of the case is to be presented to the local church in order that the whole body be involved.

Depending on the nature of the sin involved, corrective discipline in the local church can include admonition, correction and rebuke. If that fails to bring repentance the next steps can be the withdrawal of the privileges of church membership: service and participation at the Lord's Table. This is termed suspension. If this fails then the ultimate and very serious procedure to be followed is that of excommunication.

In every instance the exact nature and seriousness of the offence must be ascertained and appropriate measures carefully agreed upon by the elders, always with restoration in mind.

Corrective discipline is not to be used for matters in which there are differences of opinion or conscience. Christian liberty and liberty of conscience as outlined in chapter 21 of the 1689 Confession of Faith is to be respected. That however is different from deliberate attempts to create division in the church over differences of interpretation of doctrine or practice, or decisions that have been made by the church.

Corrective discipline primarily concerns neglect of membership responsibilities, but also moral misconduct, especially that which is not repented of.

Providing the elders and church members are convinced that repentance on the part of the offender is genuine and it is accompanied by restitution and correction of lifestyle, he/she should be brought back into membership and restored to fellowship (2 Cor 2:5-11).

### **The Manner in which Discipline is to be Applied**

In his exposition on excommunication, John Owen emphasises that the exercise of discipline requires much humble, seeking prayer and dependence on God, without

which the exercise is a horrible profanation. Also there is to be sorrow not only because of the danger into which the offender has plunged himself but because of the dishonour that is done to the gospel. Further, Owen stresses that corrective discipline is to be accompanied with a due sense of the future judgment of Christ. Woe to them who dare pronounce this sentence without a persuasion that it is the sentence of Christ himself (Works vol 16, p 169ff).

In a fine exposition of Galatians 6:1-5, Don Garlington points to the fact that Diotrephes used church discipline as a tool for eliminating opposition and quotes Stephen Smalley's assessment of Diotrephes, 'He assumed a position of leadership in his congregation because of an egocentric lust for power, which he had confused with zeal for the gospel.' The very *raison d'être* of the law of Christ is to create a community of love: his law of love (Jn 13:34,35; Gal 5:14; Rom 13:8-10) attains to its *summum bonum* when his people exhibit the ideal of mutual help and forgiveness. God's design for his people, as expressed in the law of Christ, is achieved when they bear one another's burdens; it is their love which entitles them to be called 'the Israel of God'.

Garlington points to the sin burdens and maintains that the word used is one which can include the hurts and extremely intricate problems resulting from a fall into sin. Not only does the one who has sinned need to be recovered from his sinful practice, there is also the domino effect of his sin to be contended with – the compounded difficulties occasioned by his sin especially so in families shattered by the infidelity of sexual sin. A great deal of burden-bearing is likely to be needed on the road to whatever recovery may be viable ('Correcting the Offending Brother', *Our Baptist Heritage*, Chapel Library, 2603 W Wright Street, Pensacola, FL 32505, USA).

### **Abuse to be Avoided in Corrective Discipline**

The direction of the apostle Paul in Galatians 6:1-5 calls for spirituality and gentleness in the responsibility of correction. 'Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently.'

As in the political realm, it is possible for authority to be abused by those who hold office in the Church. In an outstanding exposition on John chapter 9, Walt Chantry warns against authoritarianism and helpfully describes the symptoms of authoritarian abuse as follows:

1. An atmosphere of intimidation
2. A cruel dividing of family and friends in the process of discipline
3. The use of lengthy sessions of bullying interrogation
4. Indignation that those who hold power should be questioned
5. A relentless persecution of the one who disagrees with the policy of the leaders  
(*Banner of Truth* magazine no 295, April 1988).

## 1995 CAREY FAMILY CONFERENCE

24th – 29th July. Quinta Hall, Shropshire.

*Main speaker* Geoff Thomas, *also* David Kingdon, Joachim Rieck (Namibia) and Andrew King.

Provision for all age groups. Ideal facilities for leisure.

*For details phone* David Jarrett 0633 866214

*or write to* 38 Hazel Walk, Croesyceiliog, Cwmbran, Gwent, NP44 2NW.

In a second article (no 297, June 1988), 'Temptation to Authoritarianism', expounding Matthew 23:1-12, Walt Chantry warns against any tendency to love the honour of position and also against any inclination to manipulate people because of a superior knowledge of God's Word.

Ronald Enroth in his book, *Churches That Abuse* (Zondervan, Grand Rapids USA, 1992), identifies characteristics of these churches as follows: control-orientated leadership, spiritual élitism, manipulation of members, perceived persecution, highly regimented lifestyle, emphasis on subjective experience, suppression of dissent, harsh discipline of members, denunciation of other churches, and painful exit process.

It is important to note that horror stories of abuse should in no way deter church leaders from their duty. The knowledge of instances of abuse should rather instil a determination to bring honour to Christ in maintaining discipline in the manner which is wholly consistent with the law of love.

The exercise of discipline is costly in terms of time and patience. In some instances the issues are clear cut and the presentation of the case by the elders to the church will carry unanimous support. Sometimes the issues are very complex and there will be dissent and possible misunderstanding. Christ-like patience and meekness are required in the leaders which hopefully will be emulated by the members. The whole body is always affected by the defection of any one member (1 Cor 12:12-21).

### Helpful reading

*The Westminster Confession of Faith*, ch 30, 'Of Synods and Councils'.

*The 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith*, ch 26 paras 12 – 15.

Don Garlington, 'Correcting the Offending Brother', in *Our Baptist Heritage*.

R Eccles, 'Discipline in the Local Church', in *Local Church Practice*.

Zacharias Ursinus, *Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism*.

Daniel E Wray, *Biblical Church Discipline*, 24 page booklet. Banner of Truth.

John Owen, 'Of Excommunication', *Works*, vol 16 pp 151-183.

Jonathan Edwards, 'The Nature and End of Excommunication', *Works*, vol 2 pp 118-121, Banner of Truth.

John Calvin, *Institutes*, book 4, ch 12, section 1-13.

---

---

# The Righteousness of God

---

---

Don Garlington

Part 3. Parts 1 & 2 appeared in RT 141 & 142

In conclusion we wish to tie together several loose ends. First of all, our methodology has followed the course of biblical theology rather than systematic theology. To clarify, within the theological encyclopedia 'biblical theology' is a technical term. As Geerhardus Vos explains: 'Biblical theology is that branch of exegetical theology which deals with the process of the self-revelation of God deposited in the Bible.' In another place, Vos remarks that 'biblical theology, rightly defined, is nothing else than the exhibition of the *organic process* of supernatural revelation in its *historic continuity* and *multiformity*'. In these definitions the emphasis falls on two essential factors: process and progress.

The first term (process) teaches us that the task of biblical theology is that of tracing the great themes of salvation history according to their historical manifestation. The second (progress) informs us that the focal point of biblical theology is not only the historical development of God's self-revelation but also the expansion and upward movement of that revelation until it reaches its zenith in Christ. To state it otherwise, the revelation of God did not come in one mass at one time. Again according to Vos, biblical theology deals with revelation as divine activity; and this divine activity 'has not completed itself in one exhaustive act, but unfolded itself in a long series of successive acts'. In plain language, 'biblical theology' deals with the historical display of the biblical revelation. As such, it follows a time-line of salvation history; its approach is synthetic/linear rather than analytic/topical.

'Biblical theology' is thus to be distinguished from 'systematic theology': the former traces theological themes according to their historical development, while the latter organises itself in topical fashion, dealing with such doctrines as God, man, salvation, eschatology, etc. Consequently, our pursuit of 'the righteousness of God' has not been conducted along the lines of an *ordo salutis*, i.e. the order of the application of the work of Christ to the believer. This is why we have not sought to articulate explicitly the sorts of distinctions with which systematic theology, which regularly draws on the *ordo salutis*, functions, however valid some of those distinctions may be in other contexts. And it is from this biblical-theological point of view that we have proposed that 'righteousness is the Bible's compendious way of designating loyalty to a relationship' (first article, RT141 p22), i.e. the relationship of God and his people as rooted ultimately in the creation covenant, in which the Lord pledged his love and fidelity to his image-bearers, who, in return, rendered the love and fidelity due to him as their Creator, until, that is, the apostasy of mankind in Adam.

However, it must be clarified that as a 'compendious', i.e. 'comprehensive' term, righteousness *includes*, not excludes, its forensic aspect: it is precisely 'God's justifying act' (second article, RT142 p27) which initiates the covenant relationship and forms its on-going basis and assumption. Romans 5:1, therefore, as it sums up the argument of Romans 3:21-4:25, not only comprises but emphasises this element. If we may state it in traditional terms, the underlying assumption of righteousness as a relational concept is that *sola gratia* (grace alone) as embraced *sola fide* (by faith alone) is responsible for the salvation of God's people; consequently, *solī Deo gloria* (to God alone be the glory)!

Second, notwithstanding the obvious forensic/imputational aspect of righteousness, there are several factors in Romans 5 which are normally overlooked and should, in my view, be explored in order to deal adequately with Paul's language. At least three areas deserve some mention.

1. Following the discussion of Abraham's justification, Romans 4:18-21 stresses the persevering quality of his faith. Immediately thereafter Paul adds that the words of Genesis 15:6 were written for our sake as well as Abraham's (vv 22-23). Evidently, in Paul's mind the reckoning of Abraham's (and David's) faith as righteousness (4:3,5,8,9-10) entailed a determination to 'hope against hope' (4:18), trusting fully in God's ability to fulfil his promise, which in itself looks to the future consummation of his purposes. Thereupon the note of persevering faith is sounded unmistakably in 5:1-11 and afterward grounded in the work of Christ, the obedient last Adam, vv 12-19.

2. Romans 5:1, as observed in the first article, is modelled on Isaiah 32. Always when Paul and other New Testament authors cite or allude to the Old Testament, it is the whole context of the reference which is in view. The context of Isaiah 32 is formed by the renewal of the covenant after Israel's captivity and the consequent 'peace' which attends the new creation. A constant feature of the prophets, especially Isaiah, and some prominent Psalms, is that Israel's restoration to the land is her vindication ('justification'). Of particular relevance is that 'righteousness' stands in direct parallel to 'salvation', which is consistently Israel's deliverance from her enemies in the broadest sense. Therefore, against this backdrop, Romans 5:1, though stressing the element of forensic justification (= the imputation of Christ's righteousness), speaks also of a *change of loyalties*, from idols back to the living God, which is precisely what Isaiah 32, not to mention Romans 6:1-7:6, is all about (cf 1 Thess 1:9). The whole of Romans 5 pursues this line, particularly verses 12-19, which demonstrate that the believer in Christ, the last Adam, has become what humanity was intended to be in the first Adam. In brief, the most appropriate paradigm for Romans 5:1 (and the letter as a whole) is the prophetic picture of the coming salvation, which itself recapitulates the creation-model of the family relation of God and his people.

3. Romans 5 finds its parallel at the end of Romans 8. If I may refer to a previous study:

Romans 8:31-39 forms the coda not only to chapter 8 but chapters 5-8, with its declaration of the latter-day vindication of God's elect against the accusations of every enemy. The questions of v 33, 'Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies; who is to condemn?', are extracted from Isaiah 50:8-9, in which the obedient Servant of Yahweh (v 5) challenges his enemies to set forth their case in the presence of the Judge, confident that he will be vindicated by Yahweh from all wrongdoing. For Paul, of course, the Servant is Christ: it is in him that eschatological vindication has been secured for the Israel of God. In the contexts of both Isaiah 32 and 50 there is the promise of a restored land and eternal peace, i.e. a new creation, when the people of Yahweh again embrace their commitment to their covenant with him. In keeping with the two-stage scheme of the New Testament generally, Romans 5:1ff and 8:18ff articulate the inauguration and consummation of this prophetic expectation of a new world in which peace and righteousness dwell. In between (6:1-8:17) there is the outworking of the ethical principles of this new creation and the consequent counter-attack of the old, which still seeks to assert its former dominance.

In view of these data, and particularly the future eschatological setting of Romans 8, Paul's concern throughout Romans 5-8 is for righteousness in its 'compendious' display, i.e. the inauguration of the covenant relationship (new creation) as attested by perseverance within the covenant and a commitment to its standards until God finally vindicates his faithful people in the day of judgment (Rom 2:13). In Paul's own words, this is 'the obedience of faith' (Rom 1:5; 16:26), commencing at the point of justification, when a *change of disposition* occurs, from 'the mindset of the flesh' to 'the mindset of the Spirit' (Rom 8:5-8). From then on, the factor of willing submission to the law of God, albeit attended with many failures, characterises those who belong to Christ. This is why I take Romans 7:14-25 to be Paul's *Christian* testimony.

It is because Paul envisages righteousness in such terms that there can be no contradiction between him and James (2:14-26). It is to be noted that James buttresses his argument with two prominent examples from Israel's salvation history. The one is Abraham, the esteemed father of the Jewish race, whose *justifying faith* (Gen 15:6) was completed by his *obedient sacrifice* of Isaac (Gen 22). The other is Rahab, the Gentile prostitute (!), who demonstrated her faith in the God of Israel by her aid of the Israelite spies. In both cases, the grace of God in justification attained its finale when 'faith' was attended by 'works'.

Finally, again keeping in mind the biblical-theological (salvation-historical) approach to our subject, we reaffirm that righteousness is ultimately rooted in

creation. This is not to deny that the righteousness of God is most conspicuously exhibited at the cross (Rom 3:24-26). But rather than there being a dichotomy between creation and cross, it is the cross (along with the resurrection) which inaugurates the new creation. Underlying such statements as Romans 3:24-26 and Ephesians 2:11-22 is God's programme to restore a fractured humanity. As James D G Dunn relates, Paul's earliest teaching on the death of Christ (Gal 2:21; 3:13-14) is to the effect that the cross has broken down the boundary of the law in order to procure the blessing of Abraham on *all* - Jew and Gentile alike. It is this newly formed people, on whose behalf the 'dividing wall of hostility' has been demolished (Eph 2:14), who are 'God's workmanship, *created in Christ Jesus unto good works*' (Eph 2:10).

The bottom line of our studies, then, is that the 'righteousness of God' is a more comprehensive category than 'justification', though the latter is the foundation and presupposition of the former, the way into God's covenant. Therefore, while it is faith alone which justifies (Rom 3:24-25, 28; Gal 3:11), justifying faith is never alone (Rom 3:21-8:39; James 2:14-26).

*The three parts of this study first appeared in The Gospel Witness, Toronto, 1992 and are to be included in 'The New Dictionary of Christian Ethics and Pastoral Theology' (Leicester: Inter-Varsity, forthcoming).*

#### **For further reading**

D A Carson, ed. *Right With God: Justification in the Bible and the World*, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992.

D B Garlington, 'The Obedience of Faith: A Pauline Phrase in Historical Context', Tøbingen: J C B Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1991. 'The Obedience of Faith in the Letter to the Romans'. Part I, *Westminster Theological Journal* 52 (1990), pp 201-224; Part II, *Ibid* 53 (1991) pp 47-72; Part III, *Ibid* 55 (1993), pp 87-112, 281-97.

'Romans 7:14-25 and the Creation Theology of Paul', *Trinity Journal* n.s. 11 (1991), pp 197-235.

D Hill, *Greek Words and Hebrew Meanings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967, pp 82-162.

Steve Motyer, 'Righteousness by Faith in the New Testament', in *Here We Stand: Justification by Faith Today*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1986, pp 33-56.

B Przybylski, *Righteousness in Matthew and His World of Thought*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980.

J Reumann, *Righteousness in the New Testament*, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982.

N T Wright, 'Righteousness', in *New Dictionary of Theology* ed. S Ferguson; Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 1988, pp 590-92.

J A Ziesler, *The Meaning of Righteousness in Paul: A Linguistic and Theological Enquiry*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972.



## **International Baptist Conference Toronto, Canada, 1994**

The 7th International Baptist Conference was held at Jarvis Street Church, Toronto 13-17 October. The theme, *The Ethics of Jesus – the believer as salt and light.*

The papers are attractively printed in a paperback format. Nine chapters by John W. Campbell, Walter Chantry, Conrad Mbewe, Don Garlington, Michael Haykin, Martin Holdt, David Bugden, Erroll Hulse and Thomas N Smith form the substance of the book.

## **International Fellowship of Reformed Baptists**

On October 21, 1994, an IFRB meeting was held at Jarvis Street Church, Toronto. This was the third such meeting to have been held at 2 year intervals, taking the opportunity of the fact that several members together with leaders from various countries are gathered in Toronto at that time for the International Baptist Conference. We are grateful to the Jarvis St Church and the Seminary for their encouragement and their gracious hospitality.

This year national representatives, John Campbell (Australia), Martin Holdt (Africa South) and Erroll Hulse (UK) were present. Bill Payne (Canada) and Earl Blackburn (USA) were unable to attend for health reasons.

A very positive time of fellowship and reports was held and we were edified by John Campbell's exposition of



*Dr Andrew Fountain recently appointed principal of Toronto Baptist Seminary and Anne his wife.*

Stephen's sermon in Acts 7, powerfully demonstrating that there is nothing to boast of in tradition. We are a people of grace.

Many reported refreshing instances of encouragement in their own areas.

## **Philippines**

IFRB member, Pastor Noel Espinosa of Laguna reports blessing in his home church through a series of messages on 'The Cross of Christ'. Evangelisation is being undertaken among local residents and university students. The church is in need of a permanent building. There is encouragement in the ministry of literature and interest in their magazine *The Herald of Revival* is increasing. The Lord has provided, through friends abroad, needed pc and printer equipment.

On the wider sphere, Pastor Espinosa is presently 'teaching on a weekly basis a

number of men, some of whom are pastors in various churches, who are just beginning to discover reformation insights . . .’

Also reported is the first issue to be published of a *Reformed Baptist Theological Journal* under the auspices of the Reformed Baptist Fellowship of the Philippines.

The theme of this maiden issue is: ‘Is it still *Sola Scriptura* for Evangelicals?’ Noel covets prayers as he undertakes editorship of this journal.



Vijay Chandra

### Burma (Myanmar)

Dr Kenneth Brownell, pastor of the East London Baptist Tabernacle, recently visited Rangoon, Myanmar. Pastor Gho Khan Dal, who spent a year in London recently, travelled across Myanmar to see Dr Brownell and described his continued labour to establish a Reformed Baptist Seminary in Myanmar. Liberalism has invaded the seminaries. The Baptist denomination is by far the largest in Myanmar with 1,500,000 adherents. Some regard that estimate as conservative. The Assemblies of God is the next largest group with 123,000 members. Over 2,300 missionaries from Myanmar reach out into surrounding countries including China. Arminianism is prevalent but there are trends toward a more biblical understanding. The military regime will not allow missionaries from the outside, but ‘tentmaker’ Christians are able to make useful contributions to the well-being of the churches. There is evangelical zeal and considerable growth. During 1993 one Baptist church in Rangoon received 670 new converts by baptism.

### Fiji

Pastor Vijay Chandra continues to be encouraged in the Sovereign Grace Baptist Church in Ba. 30 believers are in fellowship with morning attendance averaging about 45. Many of the believers are new converts who face verbal abuse, and some harsh persecution from their families. There are several non-Christian families who are open to the Word. Two young men are emerging as potential helpers in the ministry and Pastor Chandra is training them in the work.

In April 1995 it is planned to start a new work in Iavua, about 18 miles from Ba. Iavua has no gospel witness in the town and is wide open to the gospel.

Vijay is also teaching in the Fiji Bible College where there are 22 students from South Pacific Islands. He teaches Greek and Apologetics and says: ‘It gives me a wonderful opening to teach Reformed theology to these students as we do Greek studies and discuss the texts.’

---

---

# The Whitefield Fraternal

---

---

## *Editor*

The first record we have of the Whitefield Fraternal (UK) dates back to the 19th of April, 1973, at 5 Fairford Close, Haywards Heath, Sussex. 27 ministers gathered for two sessions led by Geoff Thomas of Aberystwyth. The pastors were waited upon for lunch by eight ladies including Yola Thomas, Patricia Rubens and Lyn Hulse, assisted by our daughters, Sharon and Michelle. Among those present was Pastor Bernard Honeysett who is currently working on his autobiography, to be published by the Banner of Truth, a book which will have many insights into the growth of the Reformed Movement in England. Also present was David Streater then curate of the evangelical Lindfield Parish Church (which this year appointed a woman priest). Today David Streater is the secretary of Church Society, editor of *Crossway* and an esteemed spokesman for Reformed Anglicanism in England. Reformed Anglicanism represents the tiniest minority in the Established Church which is in appalling disarray.

During 1981 the Whitefield Fraternal concept grew in the mind of John Armstrong then pastoring Trinity Baptist Church, Wheaton, Illinois, USA. Under his leadership the Chicago area Whitefield Fraternal has now become an established institution in two locations (Chicago as a conurbation stretches for fifty miles along Lake Michigan). John has been promoting the 'Whitefield' concept in other parts of the United States. He has assisted in plans to commence fraternal meetings in San Francisco, Los Angeles, Sacramento (North East of San Francisco) and New York. In addition three more such fraternal meetings are in formation in California. Meetings range from 15 to 25 in attendance. Discussions have taken place about organising fraternal meetings in other states including Texas, Pennsylvania and Illinois.

The idea is to find two or three earnest Reformed pastors who are willing to take responsibility and leadership. No race is run faster than by its best athlete and no spiritual work rises higher than the quality of its leader or leaders. The steering committee should consist of men who are committed passionately to the doctrinal standards of the Protestant Reformation and who are prepared to take practical measures to promote reformation and spiritual awakening. Lively relevant exposition and application followed

by a time of open debate helps provide food and theological stimulus for pastors who themselves need to be fed.

Pastors are human beings not angelic spirits immune from human wants and feelings. A congenial domestic home setting or hotel venue is a welcome change from rows of pews. It is amazing how the reputation of a skilled chef can improve attendance. Subjects for exposition must be prayerfully chosen and personal negotiation made with appropriately gifted speakers. Such may have to be persuaded to come and may be more willing if the proposed time fits into their travel schedule. Brochures can be printed and invitations sent out to nearby evangelical pastors. Anyone known as a disrupter or incurably sectarian should be omitted and modernists definitely not invited. (The biblical attitude toward false teachers is explained in Galatians chapter one and 2 John verse 10). A personal invitation by phone is ten times, if not a hundred times, more effective than one through the mail, and an invitation by personal pastoral visit 1,000 times more effective! ('You mean you care enough about me to visit me?!') A mailing list and attendance record are practical. Sessions are held free of charge. Those who wish to do so are invited to contribute toward the expenses.

A large table of books for sale is inappropriate in most instances from a practical point of view. The serious doctrinal decline of so-called 'Christian bookshops' in Britain and America and the predominance of rubbish in them is a separate and urgent subject, but usually it is possible for fraternal leaders to negotiate bargains for sale from top notch publishers such as *The Banner of Truth* or *Soli Deo Gloria*. Really well selected contemporary books will add interest and colour to the occasion. Likewise a selection of cassettes germane to the subject of reformation and revival can be set out for sale. Requests, from any quarter whatever, to sell materials at the fraternal which are of doubtful value or at all sectarian should receive a 'dd' (diplomatic decline). Anniversary occasions, recalling the ministry of great leaders of the past, can be used for edification and inspiration. Speakers with a flair for history need to be alerted early to provide adequate time for the research and preparation necessary for such occasions. Watchfulness is important to spot that seminarian or pastor who has a gift for biography or who can make Church history come alive.

Why the name 'Whitefield'? – Three reasons. Firstly Whitefield was an evangelist and revivalist *par excellence*. Is that not our present clamant



*The Westminster Conference (see front inside cover) meets in the Lloyd-Jones Memorial Hall, Westminster Chapel, featured above. For many years the hall has been the venue for the Westminster Fellowship which began in 1941. This fraternal for ministers meets on the first Monday of every month (see D Martyn Lloyd-Jones, The Fight of Faith 1939-1981, Iain H Murray, p86ff).*

need? Secondly he was in a broad denomination. He was not remotely interested in advancing any one party. The overall glory of Christ and the advance of his universal Church was his delight. He had no ambitions whatever for empire building or glorifying his own name. Thirdly in theology he was a Puritan in the vein of Matthew Henry: doctrinal, practical and experimental.

Paramount for our ministers and for our fraternal is prayer and vision for the return of truth and holiness. John Armstrong writes: 'It is hoped that scores of such fraternal will spring up in coming years as reformation advances and prayer for a great spiritual awakening increases. Scores? Is that not exaggerated? No, already seven in California alone are coming into being.' If you wish to contact John Armstrong or have details of his highly commended quarterly journal, *Reformation and Revival*, phone (708) 653-4165, fax (708) 653 4184 or write to 152 Yuma Lane, Carol Stream, Ill 60188, USA. For UK, write to P O Box 1W8 LEEDS LS16 7XB and for South Africa, Jim Holmes (see back inside cover for address).

---

# What it Takes to Plant a Church

---

*Phil Arthur, pastor of Free Grace Baptist Church, Lancaster*

*As in America so in England, there are extensive areas in which there are no Reformed Churches. Cumbria is one of the spiritually barren counties of England. However, a seed is beginning to grow in Ulverston, South Cumbria, which may well develop into a self-supporting church.*

The Free Grace Baptist Church of Lancaster is presently sponsoring a church-planting venture based at Ulverston, a town of about 10,000 people ten miles east of Barrow-in-Furness. Ulverston's chief claim to fame is that it was the birthplace of Stan Laurel (of Laurel and Hardy).

About 7 or 8 people, forming the nucleus of the group which meets in Ulverston, travel forty miles to Lancaster for morning worship on two Sundays each month. This situation will not continue indefinitely. A year ago when there was no morning worship in Ulverston we saw them every week. We pray that in the course of time the Lord will fill the gaps in our ranks caused by their departure when weekly morning services are held.

Since the church-planting project began we have been blessed with a cohesive eldership and unanimity of



*Phil Arthur*

outlook. Subsequently the eldership team has been strengthened by the addition of Guy Smith who lives in Ulverston. An American from California, he came to Britain to work on the Trident Nuclear Submarine programme based at Barrow-in-Furness. His initiative and leadership have been very important for the stability of the work.

Although small, Ulverston has two clear advantages for a church-planting venture. First of all, it is readily accessible with good road



*Michael Pearce, founder member and elder of the Free Grace Baptist Church, Lancaster, with the Town Hall of Ulverston in the background.*

links to the rest of Furness. Secondly, it possesses a remarkable facility in the 'Coronation Hall', a large public building with attractive rooms of varying sizes available at a reasonable rent. Sunday preaching services are usually held in a pleasant upstairs room with a kitchen next door so that tea and coffee can be provided after each service. Thus we do not anticipate any immediate need for premises of our own. Sunday evening services began there in September 1992. Monthly morning services commenced in September 1993; these increased to twice a month from May this year. Mid-week Bible study and prayer meetings are held in homes.

Prayer has been a priority from the inception, first at eldership level and later in the Lancaster church as well as locally at Ulverston. In our prayers we seek primarily the blessing of God on the preaching at Ulverston. We want the work to grow through conversions. Secondly we pray that the work will grow into a flourishing, independent, self-propagating Reformed Baptist church in the Furness area. Thirdly we pray that the Lord will soon provide a suitably equipped full-time leader.

Happily the Lancaster church has a number of competent preachers. Together with Guy Smith, these provide about three quarters of the



*Guy Smith*

pulpit ministry. We are grateful to God for the help of others although distance is a problem for most like-minded churches in Cumbria and Lancashire. Evangelism is a pressing concern. Open air services are held in the summer months and personal contact has been vital in introducing outsiders to the services.

The Lord has blessed the work on several fronts. Regular preaching services at Ulverston mean that those who live there and who love expository ministry are no longer faced with the need to travel forty miles to Lancaster. When we first advertised the services we were surprised to discover how many local Christians with Reformed sympathies were having to make do with situations that left much to be desired. Some believers have been helped to enjoy a new appreciation of Christian

truth. Encouragingly a few people have come to saving faith.

There have also been discouragements because of suspicions concerning a new work which does not fall into familiar religious or denominational categories. From other parts of the evangelical spectrum there has been ill-informed criticism because the work is neither Charismatic nor fashionably ecumenical.

As yet the work at Ulverston has not been constituted as a church. Those who are members hold their membership at Lancaster and money-matters are dealt with through the accounts of the Lancaster church. Costs are not high at present and easily met. However, present levels of income would not support a full-time pastor.

When should the new church be fully independent? I believe the time will be right when it has sufficient numerical strength and a core of biblically qualified leadership to ensure that it can survive on its own. Meantime we envisage a continuing need to send preachers and provide general oversight.

The doctrinal basis of the new work is Reformed Baptist, the same as the parent church. It will, we hope, have an explicit commitment to the 1689 Confession of Faith as its subordinate standard under the sole authority of the Word of God.



---

---

## Physical Exercise

---

---

*Editor*

Commentators are divided over the interpretation of 1 Timothy 4:8, 'For physical training is of some value but godliness has value for all things.' A few of the older expositors thought this reference was to ascetic disciplines, forbidding to marry and abstinence from certain kinds of food, as mentioned in verses 3 to 5. The Greek word *gumnaze* (*exercise yourself*) supports the idea of gymnastics. The concept of physical exercise is clear and this is adequately supported by ancient commentators and almost all contemporary exegetes.

The Greeks and Romans were familiar with the time and energy spent by athletes in their quest for excellence. Paul seeks to put that kind of exercise into a subordinate place.

Spurgeon preached once on 1 Timothy 4:8 and did not think the physical training part was even worth a mention. Spurgeon never had inclination toward sports. Circumstances placed enormous strain on his body. It is not surprising that he soon declined to the point where it was difficult to think of building up his health. His disinclination to exercise did not help. The demands on him were relentless. He simply burned out.

Writing to the Foreign Missionary Association on June 25th 1832, Adoniram Judson (1788-1850) gives ten points of advice for those called to missionary service. Number nine in his list reads, 'Beware of that indolence (laziness) which leads to neglect of bodily exercise. The poor health and premature death of most Europeans in the East must be eminently ascribed to the most wanton neglect of bodily exercise.' Most of the early missionaries to Burma seemed to die of consumption. With hindsight we know that this was tuberculosis. It was not until 1944 that the antibiotic (streptomycin) was found to be the only effective way of dealing with TB. There are those who have a natural resistance to infection but those who keep themselves fit are much more likely to overcome. Judson early noted his tendency to infection and consequently always built into his life disciplines of physical fitness. He survived a horrendous period of nineteen months of imprisonment and torture.

Our good friend pastor Poh Boon Sing of Malaysia, maintained daily physical exercise while in prison. I have found that every year that I neglected physical fitness I have lost time on the sick bed with bronchitis. Every year (thankfully the majority) that I have compelled myself to keep up with exercise I have been free from infection. There is no guarantee that we will live another hour but we must steward well what life we are given.

In humour Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones is supposed to have said that he never ran if he could walk, never walked if he could stand, and never stood if he could sit down and never sat down if it were possible to recline horizontally. That he never took exercise is a myth. Seldom? Yes. Never? No.

I asked Harold Rawlings who is pastor of the Landmark Baptist Church in Cincinnati about the photo which he gave me. It was taken in 1969 (remember that the doctor was as old as the century). Pastor Rawlings said that the doctor was familiar with the nomenclature of golf. He enjoyed the game but discussed history and theology on the course! However, when asked about the Arminianism of Dr Campbell Morgan, he changed the subject. Typical of his temperament he prepared well for his shots. He neither sliced nor hooked his drives down the fairway. He played better with his irons, made a splendid job of his approach shots and gave a good account of himself on the putting greens. Pastor Rawlings remembers that the doctor insisted on tea which was properly made and had drawn. (Americans are not very good at tea!)

In a way that is unique to their calling, pastors experience loneliness and stress. The peculiar strains of the ministry are such that it is necessary to give the mind and spirit a rest. For most the best way is to take some exercise. 1 Timothy 4:8 says there is some profit in that. More than ever, we hear of resignations from the ministry. Pastors give up because they cannot endure the stress. In some cases there has been a failure to observe a weekly Sabbath which is a creation ordinance of rest.

Our needs differ. Some benefit from squash or racquet ball, others from swimming or jogging, some from hiking or cycling and a few from golf or bowls. Reader, do you need reformation in the sphere of physical exercise?

If so, what are you going to do about it?



*Pastor Harold Rawlings and Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones*

---

---

# Charles G Finney and Modern Evangelism

---

---

*Geoff Thomas*

Born just over two hundred years ago in 1792, Charles G Finney continues to fascinate evangelical Christians. Keith J Hardman has written a full impressive biography (published by Evangelical Press), and Iain Murray's new book, *Revival and Revivalism (Banner of Truth)*, examines him in the wider context of his influence on the theology and events of revivals.

When he was ordained at the age of 32 Finney immediately gave himself to itinerant evangelism. He employed features that he adopted from the frontier. His new methods included the use of protracted meetings (during which his hectoring scathing messages broke down the will-power of the resistant), inquiry meetings, all-night prayer sessions, attacks on unconverted ministers, interceding for sinners by name, prayer in public meetings led by women, and the 'anxious seat' where pressure was again brought to bear upon those under conviction to constrain them to profess conversion.

Finney's preaching was urgent, direct and personal so that he became a most sought-after preacher. His private religious experiences were released and this gave to some people a persuasion that his message and ministry were divinely authenticated. In his first three years of ministry in the state of New York many people professed faith under his preaching. He came to England twice, in 1849 and 1859 but, like such preachers as W P Nicholson of Ulster and Evan Roberts of Wales, his later ministry did not match the success of his earlier meetings.

*Lectures on Revivals* was his most notorious book. In this he rejected the view that a revival was a surprising act of God. To him a revival was nothing more than the right use of the appropriate natural means that would produce conversions. The pragmatic test became success in terms of the number of professions of faith. The book had a world-wide impact; for example, it was immediately translated into Welsh and had a pervasive influence in the 'land of revivals'. Dr Eifion Evans has recently written of the 1904 revival in Wales: 'The place assigned to human agency in revival,

as advocated by Finney's *Lectures*, and implicit in so much of the Revival's activity, was biblically unsound. This was as true of Evan Roberts' understanding of "how to be filled with the Spirit" (the right use of his method would infallibly secure the blessing desired), as it was of the manner in which so many of the meetings were conducted.' ('The Welsh Revival of 1904: Problems and Blessings', *Reformation and Revival*, volume 2, no 4, Fall 1993, pp 24 and 25.)

### **Modernistic Beliefs**

The beliefs of Finney were utterly modernistic. He denied the doctrine of original sin: 'Moral depravity is sin itself, and not the cause of sin.' He referred to the teaching of man having a sinful nature as an 'antiscritural and nonsensical dogma'. According to Finney we are all born morally neutral, capable either of choosing good or evil. Our choices, he taught, make us good or evil. He denied substitutionary atonement: 'Example is the highest moral influence that can be exerted ... If the benevolence manifested in the atonement does not subdue the selfishness of sinners, their case is hopeless.' But how can there be a 'benevolence manifested in the atonement' if the atonement does not atone? For those of us who need an atonement that not only subdues our selfishness, but covers the penalty for our selfishness, Finney's 'gospel' is hardly good news. Finney taught that Christ died for every single person, and so had to conclude, 'It is true, that the atonement, of itself, does not secure the salvation of any one' (Finney's *Systematic Theology*, p213).

Finney also denied that regeneration is a gift of God: 'No such change is needed, as the sinner has all the faculties and natural attributes requisite to render perfect obedience to God.' What then is the birth from above? 'Regeneration consists in the sinner changing his ultimate choice, intention, preference' (*ibid*, p221). Those preachers who insist that sinners depend on the mercy of God are proclaiming 'the most abominable and ruinous of all falsehoods. It is to mock the sinner's intelligence!' (*ibid*, p226). Finney preached a sermon entitled 'Sinners Bound to Change Their Own Hearts'.

As for the great theme of the Christian preacher that God freely justifies the sinner who believes in Jesus, Finney declared that to be 'another gospel', since 'for sinners to be forensically pronounced just, is impossible and absurd . . . the doctrine of an imputed righteousness, or that Christ's obedience to the law was accounted as our obedience, is founded on a most false and nonsensical assumption', and 'representing the atonement as the

ground of the sinner's justification has been a sad occasion of stumbling to many' (*ibid*, pp319-323).

### **Creator of Modern Evangelism**

Finney saw his calling, as that of every preacher, simply to engineer the reorientation that would jar the sinner's heart out of its prejudice for evil. Finney was the creator of modern professional evangelism. His belief that revivals were man-made and so could be advertised as such before the first meeting commenced, and that certain men naturally possessed greater talents for the promotion of revivals than others led to the establishment of a new kind of evangelist, who was a specialist in using the laws and means that would accomplish professions of faith.

These methods became stereotyped and institutionalised. It is impossible to measure the full impact that Finney had upon subsequent evangelicalism. To him must be given a major part of the blame for the decline of historic Christianity in the last 150 years. The fact that recent polls indicate that 77% of today's evangelicals believe that human beings are basically good, and 84% of these also believe that in salvation 'God helps those who help themselves', demonstrates that contemporary Christianity is in a profound crisis. The assumptions of Finney, which go back to Pelagius, are sounded out from many pulpits and conferences. 'It is this heresy that lies at the bottom of much popular psychology (human nature, basically good, is warped by its environment), political crusades (we are going to bring about a wonderful new society through our plans . . . and your money), and evangelism and church growth (seeing conversion as a natural process, like changing from one brand of washing powder to another, and seeing the evangelist or entrepreneurial pastor as the one responsible for adding to the church those to be saved' (Michael Horton). When God raised up William Tyndale, Hugh Latimer, John Bradford and John Knox it was to expose the Pelagian doctrines of the Roman Church and to show how they failed the scriptural test disastrously. The life of Christ was being choked in the professing Church, and so the world was being starved of light and salt. The Reformers asserted that 'salvation is of the Lord', and that 'it therefore does not depend on the decision or effort of man, but on the mercy of God' (Rom 9:16).

If that message is recovered, and Finney's neo-Pelagianism is once more confronted with the revealed truth of the Word of God, the glory of God could again fill our congregations.

---

---

# Reviews

---

---

## Marriage Preparation

*No Longer Two: A Guide for Christian Engagement and Marriage.* Brian and Barbara Edwards, Day One Publications 1994, 144pp, £5.95.

*Preparing for Marriage: Notes for Pastors.* Prepared by the Baptist Union of Ireland, 30 bound photocopied sheets, £2.50. Also available at £2.50 each, 'His' and 'Her' notes, exactly the same but with homework sheets.

*Review by Bill James*

Marriage preparation is a vital part of pastoral work and these resources are a welcome help in this area.

*No Longer Two* is addressed to the engaged couple. Most chapters begin with a brief questionnaire, discussion questions and Bible study to encourage the couple to discuss relevant issues and find their answers from the Scriptures. The remainder of each chapter is the authors' wise counsel and their own exposition of the Bible passage the couple has just studied. The range of topics discussed includes the nature of real love, the in-laws, role relationships, coping with crises, companionship, sexual intimacy, and the prospect of having children. There are also practical chapters on planning the wedding and reception, and even a review chapter for use on the first anniversary. The couple are encouraged to work through the book with a mature Christian couple, eg. pastor and wife.

Here is a fine combination of biblical principles and wise advice drawn from the authors' 30 years practical counselling experience. The application goes right down to whether the husband should phone home from the office, how the couple should plan for hospitality in the new home, and when a baby arrives summoning up courage to

leave him in the church crèche. In the sections on planning the wedding service and reception a traditional pattern is assumed and every practicality has been thought of. There is a list of the photos they will want the professional photographer to include in their album; there is even advice on the consistency of icing to support multiple layers of cake! Details of legal matters (in the UK) are included.

*Preparing for Marriage* is a compilation by various pastors of the Baptist Union of Ireland. It is a resource for the pastor to use with the couple in marriage preparation classes, and covers much the same ground as *No Longer Two*. There is not the extent of exposition and practical advice of the Edwards' book and it is therefore a much briefer publication. However, much wisdom is compressed into brief compass, sometimes in note form. There are numerous short Bible studies and questionnaires which are more detailed and comprehensive than *No Longer Two* supplies. A conscious attempt is made to draw all practical issues from Bible study. There is more help for the couple here in thinking through from Scripture their church involvement; the cost of the wedding is referred to in the context of stewardship, and the planning of the wedding service is to be done with the desire that Christ be central and the service distinctively Christian.

There are *His* and *Her* questionnaires designed to be completed and handed in before the counselling sessions. Not all will want this formality, but they are a very good starting point. Legal technicalities are dealt with, but it is assumed that the reader is a minister of the Baptist Union of Ireland.

Both of these publications are recommended as valuable resources.

## The Reformers and their Stepchildren

*The Reformers and their Stepchildren*, Leonard Verduin, 292 pages. The Christian Hymnary Publishers, PO Box 7159, Pinecraft, Sarasota, FL 34278, USA, phone 813-955-852. Retail price, \$8.95 plus post and packing. Retailers are encouraged to write for trade terms. This publisher has also reprinted Verduin's *Anatomy of a Hybrid*, 274 pages paperback, at the same price.

*A review by Erroll Hulse*

The 'stepchildren' of the Reformation were called many things by the Reformers: Donatisten (Donatists), Stäbler (staff-carriers), Catharer (heretics), Sacrament-schwärmer (sacramentarians), Winckler (those who gather in a Winkel, or a secluded place, for religious exercises), Wiedertäufer (Anabaptists), Kommunisten (communists), and Rottegeister (agitators).

The author devotes a chapter to each aspect of Anabaptist faith and life suggested by these terms of reproach.

Leonard Verduin is a non-Baptist historian and theologian who for twenty years pastored Campus Chapel at the University of Michigan. Verduin declares that 'history has to a large extent demonstrated that they were in a large way right. Little by little, step by step, item by item, Protestantism has, at least in the New World, come to endorse the very

emphases for which these men pioneered.'

The author, who translated the whole works of Menno Simons into English, was given a research grant which enabled him to spend the greater part of 1950 in Europe. During that time he studied medieval dissent against the Sacral order of Christendom. That was the inception of this unique book which was first published in hardback by Eerdmans in 1964 and has now been republished in paperback.

In his introduction Verduin shows that very early in the Reformation a Second Front opened up. This has sometimes been called the Left-wing of the Reformation and sometimes the Radical Reformation. He explains why these terms are inadequate. He prefers the men of the Second Front to be called 'The Stepchildren of the Reformation'. All kinds of derogatory names were given to these Stepchildren. These terms were not intended to convey information but rather opprobrium. Not one of these bad names was new. Most had been used for a long time.

The Stepchildren believed that the Church of Christ is by definition an element in society and not society itself. The Catholics and the Magisterial Reformers were not in agreement with that.

Luther was faced with a dilemma. He wished on the one hand to have a Church based on personal faith and on the other, a Church that would embrace all within a given locality. It was this dilemma that gave rise to the Second Front. In the one view the



Church is *Corpus Christi*, the body of Christ, which consists of believing folk and of them solely; in the other view the Church is *Corpus Christianum*, the body of a 'christened' society.

Luther was impaled upon the horns of this dilemma – and not only Luther – all the rest of the Reformers. They one and all halted between two opinions. They one and all tried to avoid an outright choice. All tried to ride the fence.

It was this fence-riding that was the immediate occasion for the exodus of those who came to be known as the Stepchildren. Those who left regarded 'Christendom' as a myth. The Reformers tried to provide an apology for the inclusive Church and resented those who left. Those who left in fact formed a very substantial body of believers.

How did the dilemma arise for the Reformers? On the one hand there was loyalty to the Scriptures which knows no Church other than the believers' Church, a Church based on personal faith. On the other hand there was that which was traditional: the Church so construed as to include all in a given locality. Only by repudiating history, twelve whole centuries of it, could one escape from the dilemma.

The first chapter *Donatisten!* is the most important. We are taken back over the first four centuries to see the origin of the Donatists. Verduin maintains that all pre-Christian societies were sacral. Sacral denotes 'bound together by a common

religious loyalty', in other words all members of society being held together by the same religion.

Babylon was sacral. Hence Shadrach, Meshach and Abed Nego were required to bow down to the great golden idol. Israel too was sacral. All without exception were to be loyal not to a human king but to Jahweh and to his law. The Roman State was sacral. Every citizen without exception was required to do homage to Caesar. For instance the Emperor Decius required proof that every citizen had tasted of a sacrificial victim. Those who had not were punishable by death! The Jews did not fit into this pattern and had a hard time. Mostly the Emperors gave them the blind eye. The Roman society prompted by this sacralist (all-inclusive) conception oppressed the Christians much more severely. Christians were often convenient scapegoats when things went wrong. If the Tiber overflowed its banks, that was said to be due to the disloyalty of the Christians.

In spite of severe persecution the Christian cause went forward by leaps and bounds. In an incredibly short space of time it advanced through every level of society in the Empire and beyond. The more martyrs' blood was shed the more the Church grew. By the middle of the second century Justinus said, 'There is not a race of men on the earth among whom converts to the Christian faith cannot be found.'

In Constantine a radical change of roles took place. Now Christianity was protected and idolators were

persecuted. It was at this point that Donatism appeared. Donatism was essentially a protest against the new sacralism. The Donatist bishop Petilian refused to entertain any difference between the persecutions once staged by a pagan government and the persecutions which his flock was now experiencing at the hands of a supposedly Christian regime. The number of believers had not changed; only the tares had become more numerous.

With Donatism begins a new variety of 'heresy', a heresy according to the State religion, but one that is theologically correct. The persecutors noted that these heretics believed all Christian doctrine and practice correctly. There was only one word in the Creed that they resisted and that was the word CATHOLIC. Greek *kata* meaning 'according to' and *holos* meaning 'whole, or entirely': 'Catholic' is the language of Christian Sacralism. The Donatist heretics avoided it. The words 'Christian Sacralism' are a contradiction for the simple reason that *Christianity* by its very nature represents a calling out of the community (world) into the body of Christ (1 Cor 1:1,2), whereas *sacralism* embraces the entire community. However we are compelled to use this contradiction in terms.

Christian Sacralism emerged in the form of Roman Catholicism. The prevailing Church had one thing against these heretics and that was their refusal to go along with

'Christian Sacralism'. It was this Sacral Church that conducted the Crusader wars bringing great confusion to the minds of Muslims as to the nature of Christianity.

As a protest, Donatism was never absent from the medieval era. There were always efforts to escape the State Church priests and get back to the apostolic Church. The true Church will always be composed of those who are personally united by faith with our Lord Jesus Christ and never society as a whole. The true Church will always be *ekkleisia*, meaning 'those called out of the world' (see article on church discipline).

The battle between these two concepts had been raging for twelve centuries when Luther put his lips to the trumpet of Reform. Without the protection of the Princes, Luther would not have survived. It was the subsequent marriage of the State and Church that resulted in Protestant Sacralism. The brutality and cruelty that accompanied the executions of the Stepchildren under supervision of the fallen 'Church' was too frightful for words.

Through this book the reader will be given a tremendous overview of Church history, a balanced view of the Reformers and the limitations of their reformation for the Church. The issues are of great relevance today. W R Estep says of this work, 'among the most relevant and pertinent publications of our times'.

**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

**Rates**

1 year £10.00 – 2 years £18.50

1 year £10.00 – 2 years £18.50

1 year \$14.00 – 2 years \$22.00

1 year \$20.00 – 2 years \$32.00

1 year \$15.00 – 2 years \$27.00

1 year \$13.00 – 2 years \$22.00

1 year \$15.00 – 2 years \$27.00

1 year R20.00 – 2 years R32.00

1 year \$30.00 – 2 years \$50.00

*Please make cheque payable  
to Peter Ong*

**Subscriptions**  
UK & EUROPE

IRISH REPUBLIC

AUSTRALIA

NEW ZEALAND

USA

BRAZIL (USA \$)

CANADA

SOUTH AFRICA

SINGAPORE  
AND MALAYSIA  
(Singa \$)

**Agents**

**Stan Thompson**

200 Appley Lane North, Appley Bridge,  
Wigan WN6 9DY, 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 60

**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

**Richard Denham**

CP81, CEP 12201,  
São José dos Campos, SP.

**Max Latchford**

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

**Jim Holmes**

PO Box 1681, Northcliff 2115.

**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".

"Reformation Today" is registered as a charity no. 1017000

Bound volumes available: 71-90 £18 or \$30, 91-110 and 111-130 each £22 or \$35,  
post free  
-----  
cut here

Please send to:

Name:

Address:

Reformation  
Today

Bound  
Volume

1 year	
2 years	
71-90	
91-110	
111-130	

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

Please enclose gift card Yes/No

Please send me a receipt Yes/No

## CONTENTS

- ii    **The Westminster Conference**
- 1    **Editorial**
- 3    **Maintaining Discipline in the Church**    Editor
- 11   **The Righteousness of God**    Don Garlington
- 15   **News**
- 17   **The Whitefield Fraternal**    Editor
- 20   **What it Takes to Plant a Church**    Phil Arthur
- 23   **Physical Exercise**    Editor
- 26   **Charles G Finney and Modern  
Evangelism**    Geoff Thomas
- 29   **Reviews**  
      *Marriage Preparation*    Bill James  
      *The Reformers and their Stepchildren*    Editor