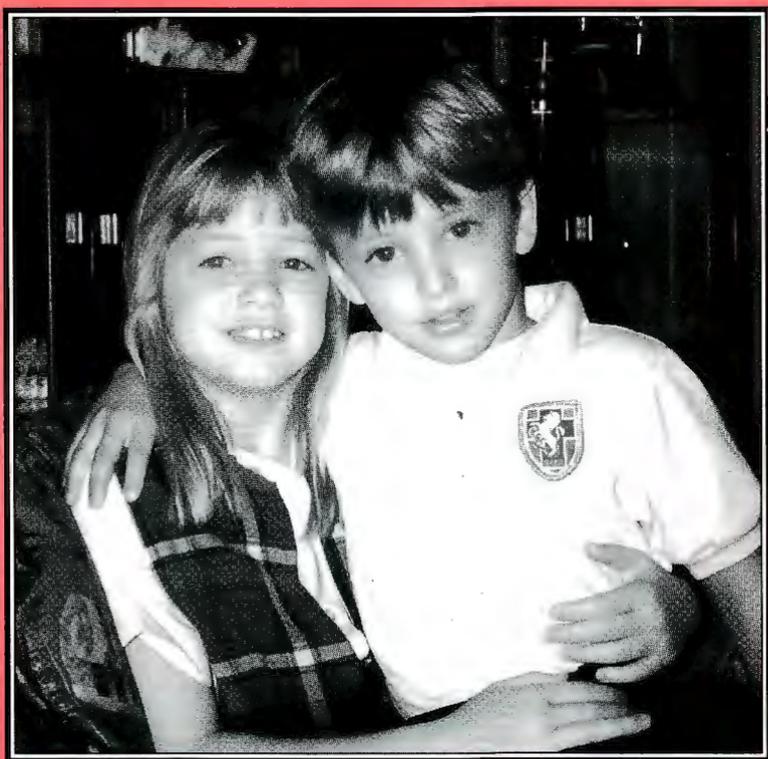


REFORMATION TODAY



MAY/JUNE 1995

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Visitors from Edgewood Baptist Church, Beth Lutz and Julie Gapinski with Geoff King, horticultural manager, *Caring for Life*, Leeds. The photo is taken in the poly-tunnels at Crag House Farm. *Caring for Life* sustains a residential home for eight young men. In addition there are about fifty young people previously homeless who are now living in their own accommodation supported by the CFL resettlement project. The livestock, agricultural and horticultural work at Crag House Farm provide a structured way of life for some of the young people. A bi-monthly newsletter bulletin describing the work is available on request from CFL, Crag House Farm, Smithy Lane, LEEDS LS16 7NH, UK.

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Front cover: *Featured on our front cover are Reagan and Christopher Hall of San Antonio, Texas, USA. They remind us of our responsibility to pray for the rising generation. Reformation and revival are vital if the doctrinal legacies that have enriched our lives are to be carried forward into the future. The photo was taken in March.*

Editorial

A highly esteemed friend, eminently versed in Reformed theology, a Presbyterian scholar of unusual knowledge and ability, has written to affirm his intention to join the Roman Catholic Church! While his identity at this stage must not be divulged I am free to share the main issue that concerns him.

The core of the matter is the magisterium. He writes, 'I realised that the only way to agree on what is a proper interpretation of a text is to have a living magisterium in the Church. The reason that there are so many different Protestants who can't agree on what the Bible says is that they have no authoritative body of interpreters.'

How can this reasoning be answered?

The main point is that Jesus has given the Holy Spirit to be our magisterium. The Holy Spirit guided Christ's apostles into all truth and the Holy Spirit continues to guide all true believers into the saving and keeping truth of the Scriptures. The major objection to this view is that the multiplicity of sects and cults, all claiming to be right, causes chaos and confusion. There always have been false prophets and false Christian religions. Each has to be tested. The Church of Rome too has to be tested. The article *By What Authority?* probes the meaning of a magisterium.

God's love to the non-elect

In his previous article in *RT138*, Mar/Apr 1994, 'Is there a Love of God for All Mankind?', Bob Sheehan surveyed the views on this subject from

the 16th century (John Calvin), 17th century (Francis Turretin and John Owen), 18th century (John Gill), 19th century (James Thornwell) and 20th century (Louis Berkhof and John Murray).

In this issue Bob Sheehan expounds the subject himself. The material was first presented at the *Carey Ministers' Conference* in January this year.

The editorial of *RT138* made reference to the *British Reformed Fellowship* and *The Standard Bearer*, fiercely aggressive proponents of hyper-Calvinism, denying God's love, the free offer and revival. The BRF is not British. It represents a minority Dutch position. It is not Reformed but hyper-Calvinistic.

We can be thankful that *The Banner of Truth* has never deviated from Puritan theology and has consistently maintained common grace. We are thankful too for the contribution of *Soli Deo Gloria* in the publication of the works of John Howe (1630 – 1705). These volumes include Howe's 'The Redeemer's Tears wept over Lost Souls – A treatise on Luke 19: 41-42'.

My book, *The Great Invitation* (Evangelical Press, 12 Wooler St, Darlington DL1 1RQ, UK) expounds the Reformed and Puritan position on the free offer as does *Invitation to Live*, also EP, which is the transposition into modern English by John Blanchard of Richard Baxter's *A Call to the Unconverted*. In the same style is John Blanchard's *Ultimate Questions*,



Dr Cary Kimbrell

4,300,000 copies of which have been published by EP in a variety of languages.

In the same Reformed and Puritan strain of uninhibited gospel proclamation is George Whitefield. It is welcome news indeed that Luke Tyerman's biography, *The Life and Times of the Reverend George Whitefield* has been republished. This is the 1877 edition (1200 pages) complete and unabridged but includes a new introduction. This limited edition of 2 volumes is now available in cloth-bound library buckram at \$79 plus shipping. Order from, Revival: The Need of the Times Publishers, PO Box 458, Azle, TX 76098, USA.

Cessation of prophecy and 1 Corinthians 13:8-13

Historically it has always been the view of mainline Christianity that prophecy and divine revelation ceased with the apostles of the New Testament, and that extraordinary signs, wonders and miracles ceased with the apostles (Heb 2:4; 2 Cor 12:12). What is the biblical basis for this view? Those who

challenge the orthodox view ask for proof texts. However the basis for regarding the apostolic era as extraordinary does not rest on any one text or texts such as those cited above but rather on the whole testimony of Scripture. The Old Testament is the book of promise. The promises find their fulfilment in the New Testament. This is summarised in the introduction to the Hebrews. 'In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in many ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son.' The verb translated '*He has spoken to us*' is an aorist. That is an event. It is complete. Once Christ is expounded all further prophecy is irrelevant.

Douglas Judisch's book *An Evaluation of the Claims of the Charismatic Gifts* needs republication. He expounds Old Testament passages which point to the cessation of prophecy. Of these passages Daniel 9:24 is the most telling. When sin is atoned for and everlasting righteousness brought in, the vision and prophecy will be sealed.

The literal translation of 1 Corinthians 13:8 reads, 'prophecies will be abolished, tongues will peter out and supernatural messages will be abolished'. Interpretations of 1 Corinthians 13:8-13 vary. Unfortunately there is a tendency to belittle opposite views as though the whole issue can be solved in a simplistic way. This has wearied some who have become cynical about the correct interpretation of this passage. We must not be impatient. Apart from most of the book of Revelation, there are only a few places in the New Testament where we are stretched as to the exact meaning conveyed. Why shouldn't we be stretched in our thinking? Dr Cary

By what Authority?

'By what authority are you doing these things?' asked the chief priests of Jesus, 'and who gave you this authority?' We can be asked personally: By what authority do you claim to be saved? By what authority do you worship God the way you do? This question of authority perplexes many. Is a magisterium the answer? The word magisterium is used of the Vatican and Roman Catholic Church. The word magisterium points to that Church authority that makes the decisions.

A friend (see editorial) writes, 'I realised that the only way to agree on what is a proper interpretation of a text is to have a living magisterium in the Church. The reason that there are so many different Protestants who can't agree on what the Bible says is that they have no authoritative body of interpreters.'

How can this reasoning be answered?

There are two principal matters to be addressed. The first is the question of the gospel and of salvation. The second

concerns the interpretation of the Bible in all matters relating to Church doctrine, Church government and Church practice.

Salvation

The Bible affirms its own clarity. Its spiritual message is for children as well as adults.

'These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up' (Deut 6:6,7).

The children of Israel were expected to understand the meaning of Scripture and teach the commandments diligently to their children.

Writing to Timothy Paul says, 'From infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is Godbreathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting

Editorial (continued)

Kimbrell, who completed his doctoral thesis in theology at New Orleans Southern Baptist Seminary, pleads the force of the entire context and argues that the place of love, essential though it is, is incidental to the overall theme of 1 Corinthians chapters 12 to 14.

We are not saying that God cannot do miracles or that healings do not take place. Nor are we denying remarkable

interventions of the Lord. What we are asserting is the uniqueness of the apostles and that the foundation of the apostles and prophets has been well and truly laid. Now we build on the foundation of God's final and infallible Word. By the power of the Holy Spirit we have all we need to complete the great mandate to evangelise the whole world.

and training in righteousness' (2 Tim 3:15-16). Salvation comes through the teaching of Scripture, and in countless cases directly through Scripture taught by parents or relatives.

'The unfolding of your words gives light; it gives light to the simple' (Ps 119:130). The Hebrew word *petî* translated 'simple' refers not to one who merely lacks a good mind, but one who lacks judgment or discernment, one who is prone to err. There is no question about it that the Scriptures are for all without exception and that no special mediator is needed. No magisterium is required. Until recently the Roman Catholic Church withheld the Bible from ordinary people maintaining that it cannot be understood without clerical help.

Jesus speaks of the angels gathering his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven, apocalyptic symbolic language describing the utterly universal free extent of the ingathering of the spiritual harvest from all nations. This harvest of souls comes through the preaching of the gospel irrespective of denomination or grouping or allegiance, mostly through assemblies or churches, but also in schools and in hospitals and in prisons and institutions of all kinds. 'For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them' (Matt 18:20). Salvation is not mediated through the dispensing of sacraments under the control of man or through the mediation of a magisterium. The Scriptures form the only infallible source of truth by which we judge all matters. In the covenant of grace to the Holy Spirit is committed the overall work of superintending the extension of Christ's kingdom throughout the world

and throughout time.

The free way in which salvation travels throughout the earth is illustrated in the case of the Ethiopian eunuch on his way back from Jerusalem. Somehow this important leader who was in charge of all the treasury of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, seems to have missed salvation while in Jerusalem. He was struggling to understand the prophet Isaiah. He was reading Isaiah 53. Philip the evangelist was given the happy task of expounding the meaning of Isaiah 53 to him. This explanation could have been performed by any Christian with a basic understanding of Isaiah 53. (It is sad that in some synagogues today Isaiah 53 is purposely omitted because of its potency!)

The Holy Spirit is the direct revealer of the meaning of the text of Scripture. 'Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law' (Ps 119:18). He may work through a preacher or he may work directly but only he is the author of new birth. 'He chose to give us new birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created' (James 1:18).

It is not intellectual ability but a moral and spiritual ability that is needed to understand the message of salvation in the Bible. 'The man without the Spirit does not understand the things of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them because they are spiritually discerned.' On the other hand unassisted by any magisterium 'the spiritual man makes judgments about all things' (1 Cor 2:14-15). The ancient Bereans were commended as being of more noble character than the Thessaloni-

ans because they examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true (Acts 17:11).

The New Testament letters are not written to a magisterium but are addressed to congregations consisting of all kinds of people some of whom were illiterate. The letters were required to be read in those early churches. Biblical meaning is plain and not hidden. But what of difficult places? Does not Peter refer to difficult places in Paul's letters? I will answer that presently.

So much for salvation. What about the hard subjects? What about the Trinity? What about the Church? What is the Church? And what about authority? Who decides what is correct and what erroneous?

The interpretation of the Bible in all matters relating to Church doctrine, Church government and Church practice.

The great objection to Protestantism is that it has split into thousands of denominations, a situation exacerbated by independency in which any group can be headed up by a cultic person who can defy everyone, abuse others, promote errors or heresies and be accountable to no one. In its worst form we have the calamities of Jones who led his followers to suicide in Guyana, and the more recent example of cultist David Koresh who was the instrument of destroying his disciples at Waco, Texas.

Who interprets Scripture? The principal issue to note is that whatever body of Christian leaders meets to decide an issue, that issue is subject to Scripture and can

be corrected by Scripture. In the example of the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15) we have an example and model for church government. Observe that those who convened were credible leaders of the Christian Church. They were under the authority of Scripture (15:16-18) and they commended their findings to the churches. They did not coerce by threat of death. They commended their ruling to the consciences of the leaders and believers of the churches.

Chapter one (sections 9 and 10) of the *Westminster Confession* declares plainly the principle that Scripture is to interpret Scripture and that all decrees of councils or ancient writers must remain under the scrutiny of the Bible.

Church councils have convened from time to time to decide important issues but especially to clarify biblical teaching on issues such as the two natures of Christ in one Person, and the nature of the Trinity. Early Church government was episcopal in form. The bishops who were sent to the councils sustained a credible testimony. These councils were wonderfully used to preserve the truth which was under attack. Everything that was written was scrupulously subject to Scripture. Thus we have the credal statements of Nicea, Chalcedon, and the Athanasian Creed. These are brilliant statements of biblical truth.

In the middle ages the Church divided into two parts. The Roman Catholic Church developed in the West and the Greek Orthodox Church in the East.

Is the Papacy a legitimate magisterium?

We need to examine history to see whether the magisterium of Rome is

credible. At the time of the Council of Nicaea (325 AD) there were six great Christian centres with leaders called archbishops, patriarchs, or popes: Jerusalem, Caesarea, Alexandria, Antioch, Constantinople and Rome. Why then should Rome be more important than the others? The concept was built up on the idea that the apostle Peter was the first pope and that Jesus says in Matthew 16:18 that Peter is the rock. It was only when the Papacy was at its height from about 1000 onwards that the real basis of it all was seriously questioned. It was then that a monk in Northern France claimed to have discovered old documents by a Church Father, Isidore of Seville, giving all the names of the popes from Peter to Leo the Great. The Renaissance scholars proved that these documents were fraudulent.

Also at about that time the question was asked about the extreme wealth of the Roman Church. Conveniently another document which pretended to have come from the year 325 was produced. This piece of forgery was known as the Donation of Constantine. It told the story of Constantine having contracted leprosy. He tried everywhere without success for a cure and then in desperation turned to Pope Sylvester. For his alleged recovery he bequeathed his extensive imperial wealth throughout the world but especially in Italy to the Church. The great power and wealth amassed by the Roman Church came mostly through some of the popes who were outstanding as politicians, men of brilliance and astuteness, entirely dedicated to the cause of the Papacy, men who also contrast sharply with the other popes who were unworthy men bent only on their own pleasures and interests. Four popes

largely responsible for the supremacy of the Roman Papacy were:

Leo IX 1049 – 1054,
Gregory VII 1073 – 1085 (formerly a monk named Hildebrand),
Innocent III 1198 – 1216 and
Boniface VIII 1294 – 1303.

Innocent III pursued the ideal of absolute papal sovereignty. It was Innocent III who forced King John of England to surrender England to his dominion. He called the fourth Lateran Council in 1215 at which time the so-called miracle of transubstantiation became the official dogma of the Roman Church.

For a Church council to have credibility there needs to be the fruit of the Spirit. As Jesus warned, 'Watch out for false prophets. By their fruit you will recognise them' (Matt 7:15ff). Also the Scripture warns that in the last days false doctrines will be introduced. Celibacy is one (1 Tim 4:3). Celibacy for the clergy has long been part of Roman Catholic teaching. (For the development of this doctrine and practice see Schaff vol 2, p 409ff.) During the 11th century a boy of 12 became Pope Benedict XI (1032 – 1045). After living a life of appalling profligacy he sold the papal office to the highest bidder in 1045. The New Testament lays out the moral requirements for pastors. They must not be novices, but men of maturity whose lives are above reproach (Titus 1; 1 Tim 3:1-7). How can a child be given supreme rule over the Church? How is it that he was permitted to continue in office while living like a devil? This shows that the leaders of the Church had lost their way and were no longer subject to the authority of Scripture.

As we have seen some popes were dedicated men but there were others who were extremely wicked such as Innocent VIII, the same man who issued a bull ordering the extermination of the Waldensians, who fathered 16 illegitimate children. Some of the popes had no idea of saving faith. Pope Leo X (1513 – 1521) who lived for worldly pleasures is reported to have said, 'It is known on all sides how well the fable of Christ has served us and ours.' Pope Alexander VI (1492 – 1503), who was living with his fourth concubine at the time, bribed enough cardinals to secure his election. He had a son Caesar Borgia who is believed to have brought about the murder of over 100 people including his own brother. Caesar Borgia had his own brother-in-law strangled in his presence. Borgia knifed a man by the name of Peroto in the pope's arms, Peroto's blood spurting over the papal robes. But Alexander took no action to curb the monstrous crimes committed by Borgia who was a cardinal until 1498.

In 1572 Pope Gregory XIII was so delighted with the news of the notorious St Bartholomew's Day (when tens of thousands of Huguenots were massacred) that he ordered the church bells to be rung and a grand *Te Deum* to be sung. Revelation chapters 17 and 18 remind us of that system which is 'drunk with the blood of the saints' (Rev 17:6). How can a system of that kind have credibility?

We have also to reckon with the scandal of the Papal Schism. After a period of about 70 years when the papal administration was moved from Rome to Avignon in France a squabble took place in which three men claimed to be pope at the same time; John XXIII (who was an ex-sea

pirate!), Benedict XIII and Gregory XII. Distance of time should not blind us to the ludicrous nature of this schism. Imagine in our day three men all claiming to be pope at the same time!

It is claimed that the Roman Catholic magisterium is official irrespective of the sins committed by those who are part of it. Nevertheless the problem of credibility is there. A true magisterium will be under Scripture and not contrary to it.

Is the Westminster Assembly a credible magisterium?

Various Protestant councils have convened and produced confessions of faith that have been used as a living magisterium to decide issues of faith. Examples are the Schleithem Confession (1527), that of Augsburg (1530), Geneva (1536) and the Anglican 39 Articles (1571). The Assembly that met at Westminster in London 1643-1647 produced the Westminster Confession of Faith. A Congregationalist version was produced in 1858 and a Baptist version in 1677 and 1689. These confessions have been the most influential in the English speaking world.

We should note that the ministers who met were men of exemplary character. They were third generation Puritans who have left the finest repository of biblical exposition in the history of the Church. The confession that they produced is thoroughly biblical and subject to Scripture. From this confession the Congregationalists (the Savoy Declaration) and the Baptists (the 1689 London Baptist Confession) derive their doctrinal standards. This confession comprehends and includes the progress represented on

the Person of Christ and on the Trinity by the councils of the early Church.

From this confession in its Baptist form (Chapter 21 paragraph 2) we have a paragraph which takes us back to where we began.

‘God alone is Lord of the conscience. He has set it free from all obligation to receive or obey such doctrines or demands of men as are in any respect in opposition to His Word or not contained in it. Indeed to believe and obey such doctrines and demands is tantamount to a betrayal of true liberty of conscience. It is against all reason, and nothing less than the destruction of liberty of conscience, when men demand of their fellows implicit faith, in other words absolute and blind obedience.’ Among the references that can be offered in support of the above are Matt 15:9; Acts 4:19,29; Rom 14:4; 1 Cor 3:5; 7:23; 2 Cor 1:24; Gal 5:1.

Conclusions

The Holy Spirit through the Scriptures acts as our magisterium. He is our Paraclete who draws alongside every

believer in Jesus. No human magisterium or mediator is needed for personal salvation.

The Holy Spirit is the magisterium to the Church of Christ on earth. Throughout this final dispensation the Holy Spirit has worked through pastors and teachers (Eph 4:11). Pastors and teachers uniting in Church councils have been used to guide the Church. The credibility of such councils is recognised where their work is entirely subject to and under the scrutiny of Scripture.

The Vatican as a magisterium has forfeited credibility through a horrendous record of persecution. We need only think of the Spanish Inquisition as one example. This magisterium has set human tradition above the Bible. The cardinal doctrine of justification by faith alone has been overthrown (Mark 7:13). The canons and decrees of the Council of Trent (1545-1563) anathematise those who hold to justification by faith alone. It is not surprising to find that assurance of salvation is not characteristic of Roman Catholics whereas it is in the case of New Testament believers (Rom 8:15-16; 1 John 5:19).

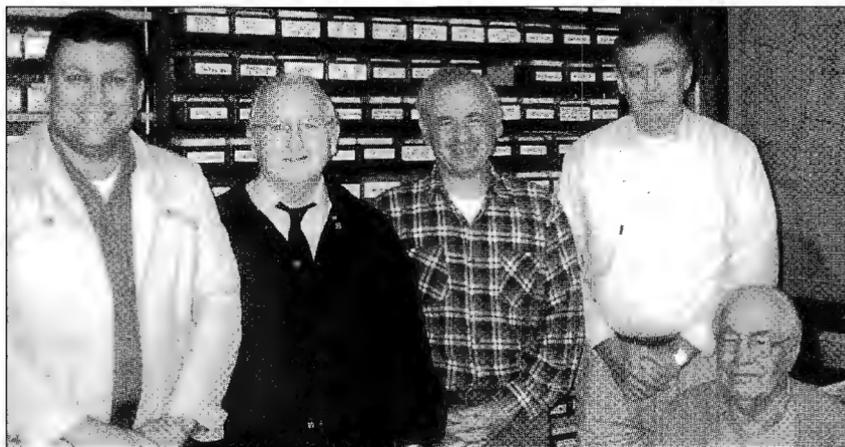
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Commended for expositions of The Westminster Confession, chap 1, sections 9 & 10, are A A Hodge and G I Williamson. E R Chamberlain's *The Bad Popes*, Dorset Press, New York is well researched for reading on the Papacy with documentation from original sources. For further reading on the development of the Vatican consult Henry T Hudson's *Papal Power*. Hudson documents the intensification of papal claims under Gregory VII to the point of

total supremacy over every dominion in the world (p35).

For reading on Roman Catholic practice and example see M A Smith, *The Church under Siege*, IVP, 1976, p130ff, Ernest G Schwiebert, *Luther and his Times*, Concordia, 1950, p13ff, and William R Estep, *Renaissance and Reformation*, Eerdmans & Paternoster, (pp8, 14, 28 and 107). Mark A Noll's *Confessions and Catechisms of the Reformation*, Apollos, pp 232 pbk is a useful work which includes the Canons and Decrees of Trent.

News



*Leaders of the Chapel Library ministry. From left to right:
Joseph Jacowitz, Pastor LeeRoy Shelton, Jr, Michael Snyder,
Dennis Hoskins, Ed Quarterman*

USA

Pensacola, Florida

The literature ministry of Chapel Library is expanding. Materials are channelled into 600 prisons in the USA and parcels are mailed to over 100 nations around the world. Joseph Jacowitz who formerly pastored a church in California is working with Chapel Library in the production of theological correspondence courses especially following contacts in Nigeria where he has recently travelled and ministered. Dennis Hoskins who has experience of missionary service in the Philippines is specialising in meeting literature needs in that country. His greatest encouragement is the observation that young Filipino men are desirous to serve as missionaries in Vietnam. A dramatic increase of demand for free grace literature in Zimbabwe has developed over the last year.

More than ever this exceptional work goes forward through prayer. It would be difficult to find any prayer meeting more blessed than the regular 8-9 am daily time of praise and intercession, a time which brings to remembrance the verse:

*Sweet hour of prayer, sweet hour of
prayer,*

*Thy wings shall my petition bear
To him, whose truth and faithfulness,
Engage the waiting soul to bless:
And since he bids me seek his face,
Believe his Word, and trust his grace,
I'll cast on him my every care,
And wait for thee, sweet hour of prayer.*

Long Island, New York

On January 1st, 1995, Grace Reformed Baptist Church of Long Island, New York, held its first worship service. GRBC is the result of a unique merger of two existing churches: Calvary Baptist of

Amityville and First Baptist of Merrick. The new church has adopted the *1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith* and is presently the only such church in the 120 mile Long Island. Pastors Michael Gaydosh, Scott Syracuse and John Herringer are all native Long Islanders who are committed to the doctrines of grace. A wonderful unity has been experienced in this merger. The generous premises at Merrick constitute a major advantage for the work as a whole.

Attendance over the first twelve weeks has been steadily maintained between 300 and 340. The dedication celebration spanned 31st March to 2nd April, the preachers being Sinclair Ferguson, Bob Cameron and Dave Dykstra.

GRBC is the home of Calvary Press, a publishing ministry which since 1991 has produced 15 titles, the best known of which are *Thoughts for Young Men* by J C Ryle and *Stepping Heavenward* by Elizabeth Prentiss. Details of available materials are obtainable from: Calvary Press, PO Box 805, Amityville, NY 11701, USA.

West Indies

Jamaica

Jamaica, about the same size as Puerto Rico, is the third largest island in the Caribbean with a population of about 2,700,000. The spiritual temperature of Jamaica influences the Caribbean as a whole. Pastors Vernon Allen and Hubert Hall were trained at Toronto Baptist Seminary (TBS), Canada, as was Monica, wife of Pastor Aaron Dumas. Others now ministering in the Caribbean who were

trained at TBS are Pastor and Mrs G Ambroisine, Pastor and Mrs V Maurice and Miss Ruth Labeth (Martinique) and Mrs Belinda Fevrier (wife of Pastor J Fevrier) and Allan Joseph (St. Lucia).

Pastor Tom Wells of King's Chapel, West Chester, Cincinnati, accompanied by his son Mark, returned recently from Jamaica. Fellowship was shared with Aaron Dumas, Vernon Allen and Hubert Hall. One meeting was attended by 550.

In RT139 we drew attention to the ministry of Pastor Aaron Dumas in Kingston, Jamaica and his need of transport. It is with much thanksgiving that Pastor Keith Heck of Grace Baptist Church, Bartlesville, Oklahoma, who has persevered in gathering support, reports that the sum of \$15,000 has now been raised which will enable Pastor Dumas to purchase a reliable used vehicle.

Pastor Dumas also reports spiritual growth in the church, some additions to the membership and continued gospel outreach.

South Africa

North West Province

The first church planting work undertaken by Henry and Sonia Jooste, straight out of college, was in an inner city red-light area of Johannesburg. This difficult work was attended with blessing and was reluctantly handed over to another leader when the living situation for the Joostes' three children became too problematic.

Henry has subsequently pastored a Baptist church in Rustenburg where the

work has grown and a new building completed. His heart has always been in church planting and during the time in Rustenburg both Henry and Sonia taught in a missionary seminary in neighbouring Bophuthatswana (named North West Province in the new South Africa). It was the editor's joy during a visit there some years ago to witness several of the students worshipping in the Rustenburg church for the first time.

With the closing of the seminary, Henry felt more and more drawn to further church planting work and was accepted by the *Africa Evangelical Fellowship* to undertake missionary service in N W Province.

The early days were difficult as months had to be spent in deputation work with the need to obtain support rather than being able to get on with the task. Henry travelled a lot, making the AEF known, establishing prayer meetings (two are now functioning in Pretoria) and tackling the Setswana language. Now, joined by an American family, Paul and Molly Pokatoo with their three children, progress has been made in studying the culture of the Tswana people.

An important aspect will be a ministry to reach out and help the people who are badly affected by unemployment, but primarily the aim is church planting.

The scene of the Joostes' present labour is *Boitekong* where, after visiting, praying and witnessing, a Bible study group has been started in the home of a mother of four who has no work and whose husband has abandoned the family. She is, however full of the joy of the Lord and



Henry and Sonia Jooste

excited to have her home so used, and to witness to her neighbours, some of whom now come in to listen to the preaching and teaching.

Paul's area of mission is *Mogwase* where ground has been bought and meetings held. The team is praying about the possibility of erecting a multi-purpose hall for teaching and worship purposes. A factory floor has already been made available – an encouraging start!

As the work progresses, so do pressures. Both families struggle with the extreme heat and health problems. Prayer is requested according to Colossians 1:9,10. News reports are available from AEF Box 23913, Claremont 7735, South Africa, to whom any support for the work may be sent.

Eastern Cape

The BIEC (Bible Institute Eastern Cape) used only to offer part-time courses on biblical doctrines and certain books of the Bible. Now under the leadership of Vernon Light, previously pastor of the

Newcastle Baptist Church, Natal, the curriculum is being extensively enlarged.

In order to train pastors and missionaries courses will include Diploma in Missions (Dip M), Diploma in Theology (Dip Th) and Licentiate in Theology (L Th). Also planned is a bridging course for the pastors of the Independent Black churches without matriculation exemption who also have little or no theological education.

The University of Port Elizabeth has agreed to accept into their Honours course BIEC students who have obtained their LTh. This means that more students will be fully equipped for future service with training from an evangelical institution rather than having to gain degrees from liberal faculties.

Those interested are invited to write for further information or for the college prospectuses to: BIEC, 16 Villiers Road, Walmer, 6070, South Africa.

Sudan, Egypt, Pakistan

We have a special responsibility to pray for those who are persecuted. Disturbing reports are regularly received from the Islamic world. News has recently reached the West of the flogging and crucifixion of four Sudanese Christians last summer. This punishment was carried out by security forces for the crime of conversion from Islam. Meanwhile Sudanese children suffer terribly in the civil war. Many of the boys have been involved in the fighting and have endured untold terrors. At least 20,000 have been

separated from their families, often forcibly converted to Islam, given new identities and 're-educated'.

In Egypt Miss Nashwa Abd El-Aziz was arrested on 30 October 1994 on her way to the airport. She had recently converted to Christianity from Islam and had been baptised. Later, the minister who baptised her, Rev Boulos Samaan Abd El-Sayed, was arrested along with two other church workers.

These reports have been taken from the International Institute for the Study of Islam and Christianity, St Andrew's Centre, St Andrew's Road, Plaistow, London E13 8QD, UK, Tel 0171 474 0743. Their bi-monthly bulletin combines detailed prayer information with in-depth reports of developments and conditions in the Islamic world. It is available for an annual subscription of £12 (US \$25 outside the UK) cheques payable to IISIC.

The secular press has reported international protest over the death sentence for 14 year-old Salamat Masih. The law in Pakistan is ludicrous. Anyone who has a grudge against a neighbour can frame him with a false accusation of blaspheming the prophet. Salamat (14) and Rehmat (46), both Christians sentenced to death, had their convictions quashed by a higher court in Pakistan. Chaos prevailed outside the court with bloodthirsty fanatics calling for death.

Since that time Salamat and Rehmat have escaped to Germany. Let us pray that the vast majority within these countries of tyranny will themselves throw out the extremists and return to a state of normality.

God's love to the non-elect

A paper given at the Carey Ministers' Conference, 1995 by Bob Sheehan

At the heart of the Reformed understanding of the gospel is the love of God for his elect, that everlasting love which it is our delight to consider in its height, its depth, its length and breadth.

Increasingly, there is a tendency among a vocal minority within the Reformed tradition, not only to emphasise the distinguishing and electing love of God, but also to speak of the non-elect in such a disparaging way that the impression that they give is that God loves his elect and despises the rest! It is necessary, therefore, to ask what God's attitude to the non-elect actually is.

The hatred of God

There are many passages in both Testaments which speak of hatred. However, as with many biblical words, it would be quite wrong to argue that the word has the same meaning in every place. Biblical words have contexts, and contexts need to be studied.

There are three types of hatred of which the Scriptures speak:

1. Malevolent hatred

The first example of malevolent hatred among men is that of Cain towards his brother Abel. Such was the ill-will and desire to hurt in Cain's heart that he murdered his brother. Such malevolent hatred is consistently and invariably condemned in Scripture (eg 1 John 3:11-15). Such hatred is always sinful, and to posit it of God would be horrible blasphemy. When God is said to hate it must be in the exercise of holy hatred and not this sinful hatred, for the all-holy God cannot sin, and, therefore, cannot hate with malice and ill-will.

2. Priority hatred

Christians are commanded to exercise priority hatred. Indeed, without it a person cannot be a disciple of Christ. Every disciple is called to hate his father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters and life (Luke 14:26).

Only evil cults understand this to be a call to malevolent hatred. Christians know that they are required to give Christ the very first place in their loyalties and to allow no-one and nothing to take the position that he should have in their lives. Priority hatred involves making choices and putting responsibilities into an order of importance. Christ must have the pre-eminent place in our affections and obedience. This hatred is a holy hatred. God exercises priority hatred. He assents to bless an Ishmael but gives priority to an Isaac and makes his covenant with him (Genesis 17:17-21).

3. Judicial hatred

When a judge hands over a criminal to execution, he exercises judicial hatred. The criminal must bear the penalty of his crimes, and, in capital offences, die without mercy. God exercises this judicial hatred. It is the manifestation of his holy and righteous indignation with sin. It is often linked in Scripture with priority hatred.

Through the prophet Malachi the awesome sentence was reiterated. Judicial hatred was declared in the context of priority hatred, 'Jacob I loved, but Esau I have hated, and I have turned his mountains into a wasteland' (Malachi 1:2-3). Esau was handed over to reap what he had sown, without mercy.

It is impossible for God to exercise malevolent hatred, but he does exercise priority hatred and judicial hatred. These are consistent with his character. He chooses to save the elect and chooses to pass by the rest of mankind in its sin. Eternity will see the full manifestation of judicial hatred against sinful humanity.

Understanding the implications

It is sometimes gratuitously assumed by those who loudly declare God's hatred of the non-elect that priority and judicial hatred exclude all possibility of the non-elect knowing anything of the love of God in any way. This is a serious mistake. It is inconsistent with the examples of such hate in action in the Scriptures and with those Scriptures which are complimentary to the teaching of holy hatred.

Jacob is said to have hated Leah and to have loved Rachel. God noted this hatred and blessed Leah with children and inflicted barrenness on Rachel (Genesis 29:35). The very fact that Leah could have Jacob's children meant that in spite of his hatred for her, he still fulfilled his marital duties to her. This hatred neither excluded all responsibilities to her, nor all pleasure in her as his wife. He gave priority in his affections to Rachel but this did not mean he had no time, attention, affection and care for Leah. Yet she is justly, according to biblical terminology, described as hated.

What of our Lord's teaching that we are to hate our families (Luke 14:26)? Does hating them for Christ's sake mean that we are to become bad parents and partners, neglecting them and dismissing them altogether from our affections? Of course not! The hatred Christ commands is not a negation of the natural affection that we are to have for our families. Being Christians does not make us neglect our responsibilities to them. It simply puts them in their proper place in our order of priorities.

Does the command that we should hate our lives (John 12:25) call us to self-neglect and sado-masochism? The very question gives its own answer. There

is nothing inconsistent for those who hate their lives with feeding and caring for their bodies (Ephesians 5:29)!

When God hates the non-elect with the hatred of priority, before he brings them to their full experience of judicial hatred in eternity, we must not assume that such hatred means that he ceases to care for them, show them benevolence, kindness, affection and love. There is a hatred that is not malevolent and devoid of kindness. Even when the judge has sentenced the prisoner to death, and that sentence is inevitable, he does not have to order the prisoner to be maltreated while he awaits execution in order to show how opposed he is to his crimes! Some brethren seem to think he does! Holy hatred will result in hell, but hell is not on earth.

The holy hatred that still shows love

Those whom God hates with priority hatred and on whom he will inflict judicial hatred are:

1. Still his offspring

Speaking to the Athenians, of whom only a few were going to believe, Paul quoted their poets with approval. We are the offspring of him in whom we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28).

Whatever man has become through sin, to whatever depths he has sunk, he is still the offspring of God. True, only the elect are sons by adoption, but the most wretched of the sinful race is still a product of the creative power of God and one in whom there remains something of the image of God. God never forgets that man is made in his image and is the work of his hands.

We always need to remember that God the Creator does not look with indifference on the things he has created. In Reformed circles there are an increasing number of 'Jonahs'. They are quite happy as long as they are saved and provided for by God and sit contented waiting for wrath on the people whom God has not chosen to be his own. To such, God shows himself to be of a quite different character. God had a concern for the 120,000 small children of Nineveh and the cattle as well (Jonah 4:11). God is concerned for the welfare of cattle and children among those who are not his chosen race.

2. Still recipients of his kindness

It is correct to read the history of the non-Israelite nations in Romans 1 and to see them handed over to the wickedness of their hearts and allowed to go their own ways. But as the apostle reminded such nations of those years of wandering, he also asserted that even then God had not left them without witness but had done them good in giving, providing for them and causing

them joy (Acts 14:17). The nations that did not want to retain the knowledge of God were not totally abandoned by him.

The manuscript evidence is divided on the verb used by Paul but both *agathapoeio* and *agathourgeo* mean to do good (v17). God did good to the non-elect nations even when they were allowed to walk in their own ways. There is a goodness to those who are, and shall be, the objects of holy hatred.

3. Still loved although they are enemies

Our Lord exhorted his disciples to love their enemies and do them good, not only because their reward would be great but also because by so doing they would be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the unthankful and evil (Luke 6:35). We are to love our enemies because God loves his. His mercy is the pattern for ours.

We may not pretend that the unthankful and evil are the elect before conversion. That would be special pleading: eisegesis not exegesis. The parallel passage shows that our Lord is speaking of common blessings such as the sun and the rain which both the good and evil, the elect and non-elect, experience.

Nor may we try to slide away from the verb 'love' and call it benevolence or general mercy, general kindness or common grace. We are called to love (*agapate*) and in so doing be sons of the Most High. There is no ambiguity here, except for those who want to create it.

We can say even to the enemies of God while they remain in this world, 'You are God's offspring, his creation, and he is kind to you. He does you good. He shows you kindness. He loves you. His creatorial care and providential provision proclaim this.' God does not despise the non-elect! He shows them love and kindness.

The attitude of the incarnate God

Christ is the image of the invisible God. To have seen him is to have seen the Father, not in his manner of existence, but in his moral character. We do not look to Christ, the incarnate God, to understand what it means for God to be omnipresent, for Christ in the body does not represent omnipresence. We do, however, look to Christ as God incarnate to discover what God is like in his character. Christ is the perfect display of God's righteousness, holiness, goodness, mercy and grace.

For this reason we may not draw a distinction between Christ's attitudes towards sinners and those of God his Father. The attitudes of Christ are the attitudes of God as surely as his words are the words of God.

Christ, the incarnate image of the invisible God:

1. Was full of compassion

There are few warmer words than the word 'compassion'. It is a word that the Gospel writers like to associate with Christ. As Jesus preached and healed all sorts of people, some who would believe and some who would not, the elect and the non-elect, he had compassion towards them because they were like sheep without a shepherd (Matthew 9:36). He did not look at the crowd with a distinguishing squint, with compassion on the elect but not on the non-elect! He had compassion on the crowd universally and promiscuously. This compassion to all, which so marked his words, was a regular feature of his ministry (cf Matthew 14:14).

We may not pretend that the word compassion means something other than a manifestation of love. Loveless compassion is a repulsive concept, a contradiction in terms, nothing other than cold comfort. There is nothing so repugnant as charity shown without feeling for those who are helped. It is the worst sort of Dickensian hypocrisy and totally inapplicable to the compassion of the incarnate God. Christ had compassion on sinners, and so should we!

2. Showed love to the impenitent

Christ's enemies despised him because he was the friend of tax collectors and sinners (Matthew 11:19), whereas they only wanted to fellowship with the 'righteous'. His friends did not merely include the elect but the non-elect also. There were elect Matthews among the tax collectors but many others also.

When our Lord met the rich, young ruler, a self-righteous prig if there ever was one, it is said that our Lord loved him (*egapesen*: Mark 10:21). Of course, he did not love him *for* his sin but he loved him when he was yet under its power.

Some, alarmed that God's Son should be said to love such a man, allow their theory to colour the story. They assure us that as Christ loved him he must have eventually been saved, that he must have been one of the elect. Although he went away sad, he must, after he had turned the corner have had second thoughts and returned to be saved! How strange that the Holy Spirit caused all three Gospel writers to omit this from the account! There is more than a suspicion of special pleading here. The fact is that Christ loved him, sinner though he was, because Christ is the friend of sinners.

In the parable of the wedding banquet (Matthew 22:1-14) we have a most remarkable statement from the mouth of the King. When he came to see the guests he saw one who was not clothed in wedding garments and ordered his exclusion into outer darkness: obviously a picture of the man without the righteousness of Christ who is consigned to hell. How does the King address him? 'Friend' (*hetaire* v12). Even in censuring and condemning him he calls him 'friend'.

Perhaps someone will object that this is only a parable and that God would not so address a hell-bound sinner in real life. Such an objection is ill-founded. When approached by the son of perdition, who would betray him with a kiss, Jesus addressed him as 'friend' (Matthew 26:50). What amazing condescension to such a notorious sinner whose name has become a byword for treachery.

God incarnate calls him 'friend'. God incarnate is the friend of sinners, the rejecting, the betraying, the hell-bound. He shows them genuine friendship, kindness, mercy and love. Their maltreatment of him, who is so good to them, is an exacerbation of their guilt and a demonstration of the deep-seated nature of their wickedness.

3. Commands all men, elect and non-elect, to receive spiritual benefit

There is undoubtedly a great deal of truth in the assertion that not all the invitations and commands of the gospel are directed to all men indiscriminately. Some are addressed to people in a particular spiritual state. However, there are commands that are clearly not directed to specific types of individuals but to all who hear the message with their physical ears, whether they have spiritual ears to hear or not.

Towards the end of his earthly ministry our Lord was preaching to a crowd. The crowd was objecting to his teaching (John 12:34). To this crowd, without making distinctions among its members, speaking one word to the elect and another to the non-elect(!), Jesus issued two commands, 'Walk while you have the light', and 'While you have the light believe in the light' (John 12:35-36). God incarnate commanded the crowd to walk and to believe.

That these commands were not addressed to the elect alone is evident from the subsequent events. Firstly, Jesus had to hide himself from them (John 12:36). Secondly, John reports that they still did not believe in him (John 12:37). Thirdly, John explains their unbelief as a fulfilment of prophecy concerning their judicial hardening by God (John 12:38-40). God commands those who are not going to be saved to receive the gospel. This is their responsibility. The gospel issues commands to all sinners.

There are those who not being able to understand God's ways deny that such commands could have been issued, or question their sincerity, or object on this ground or that. But our ability to understand is not the measure of God's truth. It is the ultimate in rationalism and humanism to deny the fact that God in the gospel gives commands to sinners because we are not entirely clear how his revealed will and his secret will are compatible.

The fact is, that God commands men in the gospel to believe that gospel, and they are commanded as men not as elect men. It is a kindness in God to

command sinners to walk in the light and believe in the light. It is to their loss, and is a demonstration of their sinfulness, that they do not hear.

4. Longed that his hearers might come to him for salvation

Some brethren would like to blot Matthew 23:37 out of their Bibles. It is an embarrassment to their neat, systematic approach to God's work in salvation. We may not, however, blot out what is recorded by inspiration of God and what displays so much of the compassionate heart of the incarnate God. Nor may we explain it away so as to evacuate it of any real significance.

The Son of God, towards the end of his ministry, reflected with deep sadness over his unfulfilled longing. He had often longed to gather the Jews under his saving protection, but they would have none of it. Their determination to die grieved him deeply. He took no pleasure in the death of these sinners. He yearned that their attitude might have been different.

Analogies at this point are extremely difficult. All the works of God are unique because he is unique. There is always mystery when we relate the decretive will of God (what he has planned) to the preceptive will (what he has revealed as pleasing to him for us to do). This far we may go. His rejection by the Jews was neither a matter of indifference nor of pleasure to him. Their stubborn sinfulness caused him great grief. God never enjoys human unbelief. For wise reasons in himself he may choose not to over-ride it and compel them to come in, but that unbelief is not only an affront to his holiness but a grief to his heart.

5. Wept over their impending destruction

As our Lord approached Jerusalem he recognised that her day of reckoning was near and that hope of salvation was past. Yet there was no spirit in him which censoriously and coldly declared, 'It serves you right' even though the punishment was just. Rather he wept (Luke 19:41). God incarnate wept over the impending fate of the irretrievably lost.

You do not weep over people for whom you do not care. You do not weep over those whom you are pleased to see suffering and punished. Still I remember the chilling note of rejoicing in the statement of pleasure issued by the Ayatollah Khomeini when he heard the Shah of Iran was dying from cancer. How he thanked Allah! But God incarnate is not Khomeini and his Father is not Allah! God incarnate wept because his enemies were going to be destroyed. These to whom he had shown many kindnesses were about to reap the consequences of their innumerable sins and he wept. It was not the weeping of disagreement with the sentence. It was not the weeping of frustration at an act of injustice, for there was none. It was the weeping of a Saviour who sorrowfully observed sinners in self-destruction.

What of us?

If the Father and the Son have a love for the non-elect, then the children should reflect it. But do we? Is not the term 'hard Calvinist' so often an accurate description? It is utterly inappropriate for us to despise those who are under the priority and judicial hatred of God. There, but for the grace of God, we would be also. Grace alone has put us in the number of God's family. We were not chosen and saved because of anything in us but because of reasons in God. He chose not to let us follow our will to hell, but to change our hearts that we might come to him. As the Lord has made the difference it ill becomes us to take the praise to ourselves or act as though we were superior to others, The pardoned criminal on death row has no grounds for boasting in his pardon or for despising those left to reap the penalty of their crimes.

If God has concern for all his human creatures, does them good and shows them kindness, even though they are his enemies, we are not to do less. His love to all is the pattern for our own love to our fellow human beings. Do non-Christians experience our kindness even if they do not respond to it as they should? Or are we no better than the heathen, who only care for those who return their love?

What is our attitude to those who despise and reject the gospel we preach? Do we still show them friendship and seek their good? Do we still take the gospel to them and call on them to receive it? Do we really long for sinners to be saved? Are we Christ-like in these areas of our lives also?

Do we care about our families, our friends, our neighbours, our congregations, our colleagues? Do we sorrow over their lack of interest in the gospel, their rejection of its truth? Do we ever feel sad for sinners? Do we ever weep over their impenitence and doom? This is not a matter of temperament! It is a matter of genuine concern.

I have noticed in myself something shocking! I have wept more tears over the deaths of my Christian friends and relatives, even though I know that they have gone to be with the Lord, than over some of my non-Christian friends and relatives, who are lost! What is wrong with my heart? For the loss of my fellow-believers I mourn, and rightly so (Acts 8:2), but where is my Christ-like mourning for doomed sinners?

Our understanding of God's attitude to the non-elect as they live upon this earth is not a merely academic matter. It will radically affect our preaching of the gospel and our approach to unregenerate people. We need to be sons of the Most High and followers of the Master in this matter. Are we?

The Glory and Weakness of the Church

Editor

By means of a sequence of pictures the book of Revelation describes the struggle of the Church from the first to the second coming of Christ. In graphic form and typical of the book as a whole chapter 12 describes the birth and ascension of the child (1-6), the expulsion of the dragon (7-12), and the last dreadful assaults made on the woman by the dragon (13-17). We will look briefly at the three principal characters: the enormous red dragon, the child and the radiant woman who bears him.

The enormous red dragon

This dinosaur-like creature has a gargantuan tail. He sweeps a third of the stars of heaven to earth. There is no room on our little globe for one star let alone many. It does not take long to demolish the idea that we should interpret the book of Revelation literally in the way we interpret the letters of the NT. It is misguided to attempt a timescale or build a scheme of eschatology on this book. This part of Scripture, like Daniel chapters 7-14, is essentially apocalyptic. It is like an art gallery of vivid impressionist oil paintings. I am reminded of Hans Rookmaaker's book *Modern Art and the Death of a Culture* in which he explains the genius of the great masters and the messages that are conveyed in their works.¹ We need to interpret

correctly the paintings of Revelation. In chapter 12 alone there are at least 16 symbols. For example note the seven heads (symbolising universal knowledge) and ten crowns (symbolising universal powerful influence).

According to 12:7 the stars represent the fallen angels (see also Job 38:7; 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 6). Demons rampage and deceive everywhere (Eph 6:12). The dragon is also called that ancient serpent pointing to the fall of our first parents (Rom 5:12-21). Satan means hater or accuser. He is filled with malice. He knows his time is short. He is limited in what he can do (verse 11).

Revelation 20 describes Satan being bound and thrown into the abyss for a symbolic time span, that he should deceive the nations no more. It is a picture. That must be balanced by other pictures such as these in chapter 12. The devil resists but cannot withstand ultimately the entrance of the gospel into all nations. Every inch of ground is contested. Warfare is incessant (12:17).

The Man child

We are told of the birth and ascension of the child. He is destined to rule the nations with an iron sceptre. Psalm 2 describes his universal dominion. We are to pray that the uttermost parts of

the earth become his possession. The Messiah suffers on our behalf. His reward is commensurate with his excruciating ordeal and humiliation. Now he reigns at the Father's right hand until his enemies become his footstool (Ps 110:1). His name is exalted above every other name (Phil 2:9-11). He exercises power on behalf of his people. His dominion is one which will extend from sea to sea and from the river to the ends of the earth (Ps 72:8). He will be a light for the Gentiles and his salvation will go to the ends of the earth (Isa 49:6b).

The radiant woman

The woman symbolises the Church (Isa 54; Hosea 2:14-23; Eph 5:32). Viewed by the company of heaven she is glorious. She is depicted as clothed with the sun. She has the moon under her feet. A crown of twelve stars adorns her head. A further picture of it is that of the Holy City, the new Jerusalem coming down from heaven, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband (Rev 21:1-4). Viewed from heaven there is none like her.

Viewed from earth the prospect is different. Think of the believing community when Jesus was born. Joseph and Mary had no rich benevolent fund to fall back upon. Provision came from divine providence: the timely visit of the wise men of the East. When eventually these humble parents went up to Jerusalem there was Simeon, an old man, also the elderly widow Anna. The Church on earth was as poor and weak as it is possible to conceive.

The vivid descriptions of chapter 12 include the woman in flight pursued by the dragon, the opening of the earth and salvation from a torrential flood. The story of the Church is the story of relentless persecution. John Foxe's (1517-1587) massive work describing Christian martyrs spans the centuries. Foxe's work has played a major role in English Church history. Foxe's scholarship as a historian has not been refuted. The warfare continues today. There are more martyrs in the 20th century than ever before.²

The Church on earth is a Cinderella. Her appearance is often shabby. The pilgrim Church during her wilderness journey was vexed with rebellions. Every affliction to do with progressive sanctification beset that community. Weak leadership discourages some assemblies while others are pained by abusive or 'Diotrephetic rule' (3 John 9). Often in turmoil within and distressed by oppositions from without she perseveres on her journey of faith.

*Though with a scornful wonder
Men see her sore distressed,
By schisms rent asunder,
By heresies distressed,
Yet saints their watch are keeping,
Their cry goes up, 'How long?'
And soon the night of weeping
Shall be the morn of song.*

References

1. H R Rookmaaker, *Modern Art and the Death of a Culture*, 256 pages, IVP.
2. James and Marti Hefley, *By their Blood*, Baker, 1988, see review RT 120.

Baptism in the Early Church

Prof H F Stander and Prof J P Louw, *Baptism in the Early Church*, Didaskalia Publishers, P O Box 905-031, Garsfontein, 0042, South Africa, 1988, pp175. A short reference to this work was made in RT128.

A review by Michael A G Haykin

Although this book is directed towards the Dutch Reformed community in South Africa and its position on baptism, the authors have produced a book that is essential reading for anyone interested in the Early Church's position on baptism and the transformation that it underwent during the fourth century. Stander and Louw observe in their introductory chapter – 'Baptism and the Use of Church History by Modern Scholars' – that texts relating to baptism by early Christian authors are often cited out of context, and so they have made it one of the main aims of their book to provide these statements in their larger contexts and thus give the reader opportunity to decide for himself what these texts are saying. All too often, scholars have made claims for the presence of infant baptism in various statements of second- and third-century authors, from which, when the larger context is judiciously examined, quite different conclusions result. The provision of many of these sources for readers other than scholars thus makes this book especially valuable.



Cover illustration from *Baptism in the Early Church*

Ranging from such first-century works as the *Didache* to statements by the fourth-century Greek author Theodore of Mopsuestia (ca. 350-428), these sources reveal that up until the third century there is no indisputable, unequivocal evidence that infant baptism was practised. Stander and Louw point out that statements relating to the baptism of children – who could be called thus in the ancient world up until their mid-teens – are frequently misunderstood by scholars as describing the baptism of babies. Children though are not babies, and the former are quite capable of making a response of faith to the claims of the gospel (pp4-6).

The Alexandrian theologian Origen (ca. 185-254) and the Latin churchman Cyprian (ca.200-258) are among the first writers to indicate clearly that certain Christian communities were beginning to tolerate the practice of infant baptism (pp 69-70,90). However, there is no indication at all that this practice was widespread during this century and the baptism of believers continued to be widely practised well into the 300s.

Critical in the shift towards the baptising of infants was the theological meaning increasingly given to baptism; baptism for the majority of believers from the third century on came to be identified with 'rebirth, the washing away of sins, and the bestowing of the Holy Spirit' (p89, speaking of Novatian's theology of baptism). If baptism in itself had such salvific power, then, writers like Cyprian argued, it should be open to infants, for it would thus secure a place in heaven for them if they died at a tender age (p94). Stander and Louw stress that it is important to note that not all agreed with Cyprian's views, and it was not for another hundred years that there began to be a large-scale movement towards infant baptism (pp151-152). Thus, in time, the 'ineradicable human tendency to take the sign for the substance' made of baptism the means of salvation and it, 'rather than Christ, became the guarantee of

eternal salvation' (p167). This focus on the meaning of baptism also led to a relative neglect of the issue of the mode of baptism. Immersion appears to have been the norm (pp53,97,168), but it was never really debated.

Careful and cautious examination of these early Christian sources by Stander and Louw thus leads to a convincing case for seeing infant baptism as first appearing in the third century, and then, on the basis of what baptism was perceived to accomplish, being more and more widely employed on behalf of infants in the following century. There were dissenting voices in the third century about the baptism of infants, but in the heady days of the 300s such voices were increasingly rare. The ramifications of this book for the New Testament perspective on the proper subjects of baptism are immense. As Stander and Louw state (p169): it is 'unsound to scrutinize the New Testament writings for allusions to infant baptism, since the latter involved a historical development'. It was only when these early Christian communities began to think that 'baptism causes belief' instead of holding to the view that 'baptism symbolizes belief' (p101) that concerted moves were made to include babies among the proper subjects for baptism. Essential reading for anyone interested in this hotly debated issue!

Tongues shall cease and prophecies fail

Cary Kimbrell

In 1 Corinthians chapter 13 verses 8-13 we read, 'Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away... And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.' (*I am using the KJV in this article.*)

These verses are contained within a larger discussion of spiritual gifts. In 12:1, Paul starts this section of 1 Corinthians with the phrase, 'Now concerning spiritual gifts, *pneumatikon*, I would not have you ignorant.' In chapter thirteen he continues the discussion by contrasting love, *agape*, with gifts, *charismata*. The apostle shows the excellency of love over other gifts. Love's characteristics show its abiding nature, whereas the other gifts in 1 Corinthians 13 have a temporal nature. The difference between love and these gifts is that love does not fail, *ekipto*, but they do fail. Love never fails, but prophecies fail, *katargeo*, tongues cease, *pauo*, and knowledge vanishes away, *katargeo*. The apostle is saying that prophecies, tongues and knowledge are partial things (v 10) and ceasing things (v 8), in contrast to love, which is the greatest of abiding things (v 13). These gifts are characterised as ceasing; whereas faith, hope and love are characterised as abiding.

Herein is the key to the interpretation of this passage.

The Nature of the Revelatory Gifts

The partial and ceasing gifts discussed in verse eight are prophecies, tongues and knowledge. The nature of these gifts is as follows. First, prophecy was the ability to predict with certainty events of the future (foretelling). This is a different concept from preaching although the aspect of forthtelling is included in the concept.

The forthtelling was also immediate and special revelation, though tied to the Word of God. The apostle Paul seemed to distinguish preaching from prophecy by the different words he employed. Paul used the noun *kerugma*, or the verbs, *kerusso*, *euaggelizo*, and *kataggello*, when he referred to preaching, not the words *propheteia* and *propheteuo*. These words were reserved to describe this extraordinary gift. In 13:8 he used the word *propheteia*. The context suggests the gift to which Paul is referring was the ability to speak

revelation directly from God concerning events that will happen, or in a revelation from the Holy Spirit explaining the Word of God. In other words, prophecy was the ability to speak new revelation from God, either the explanation of the Word, or the predicting of a future event. John Owen saw both aspects of the gift of prophecy:

Only, I take it here in its largest sense, both as it signifies a faculty of prediction, or foretelling, things future upon divine revelation, or an ability to declare the mind of God from the word, by the especial and immediate revelation of the Holy Ghost.¹

Second, tongues, *glossai*, were languages which required an interpreter to translate them to the people. Whether it was an ecstatic utterance, or an earthly language unknown to that particular congregation, is debatable, but not in the compass of this article.² The point is that these languages came through the supernatural movement of the Spirit as direct revelation from God. God was speaking directly to the congregation through a person exercising this gift. Charles Hodge pointed out that the speaker was ‘under the guidance of the Holy Spirit’ and was ‘the organ of the Holy Ghost’.³

The third word is knowledge, *gnosis*. This is not knowledge in the sense of cognisance. To understand the word in that light would make no sense in this context. The apostle is talking about the spiritual gift of the word of knowledge (12:8). This word of knowledge was given to someone in the congregation by the Spirit of God who in turn spoke it to the congregation. It was direct revelation from God through the Spirit. Owen wrote, ‘The knowledge here intended is such a peculiar and especial insight into the mysteries of the gospel, as whereby those in whom it was enabled to teach and instruct others.’⁴ The difference between the word of knowledge and tongues was that tongues had to be interpreted, but the word of knowledge was spoken in the language of the people.

These three gifts had two things in common. First, they were gifts used of God to give specific and direct revelation. Second, they were gifts which would fail, or cease. They were revelatory, and they were ceasing.

The Abiding Gifts

In contradistinction to the temporal nature of prophecy, tongues and knowledge, Paul says there are some gifts that abide. ‘And now abide (*menei*) faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest (*meizon*)⁵ of these is love’ (13:13). Faith, hope and love abide even when prophecies, tongues and knowledge cease. The apostle told the Corinthians that there would come a time when the revelatory gifts would cease, while faith, hope and love would abide. This time would begin when the perfect thing, *to teleion*, came. ‘But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away’ (13:10).

What is this perfect thing that will cause the temporal gifts to cease, without affecting the abiding gifts? The answer to this question is the key to the passage, and to the greater discussion of the relevancy of spiritual gifts for today.

Two major opinions have been advanced in the interpretation of the phrase 'that which is perfect', *to teleion*. These opinions will be examined in turn.

The Perfect Thing as the Second Coming of Christ

First, 'the perfect' refers to the second coming of Christ, or the end of this age. Those who advance this opinion say that these gifts shall exist, as they have always existed, until the second coming of Christ. Many of those who advance this position say that the gifts will become especially active at the end of the world, or just before the coming of Christ.

On a cursory reading of 1 Corinthians 13:8-13, it looks as if that interpretation is plausible. Paul seemed to be describing heaven. The apostle wrote, 'Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face. Now I know in part but then shall I know even as also I am known.' Much of the commentary material examined advanced this idea. However, with this interpretation there is a problem with the abiding gifts. In the whole of 1 Corinthians 13 the apostle was contrasting love with the *charismata*. This contrasting comes to the very end of the chapter, when Paul contrasted faith, hope and love with prophecy, tongues and knowledge. The one he called abiding and the other, ceasing, respectively.

If one identifies something as abiding and contrasts that with something that is ceasing, the law of necessity demands a time for the abiding things to abide after the ceasing things have ceased. Why else would the contrast be made between these terms?

Objections to the Interpretation above

According to the context, the ceasing gifts will cease at the coming of the perfect thing. Therefore, of necessity, the abiding gifts will have to abide after the perfect thing comes. The correct interpretation of 1 Corinthians 13:8-13 will have to satisfy this condition. The above interpretation does not do so. Romans 8:24 states, 'For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?' The apostle told the Roman Christians that hope that is seen, that is realised, is no longer hope. Realised hope no longer meets the biblical qualification for hope. Therefore, there will be no need for hope once the hope of a Christian is realised.

The same is true with faith. Paul wrote to the Corinthian church, 'Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are

absent from the Lord: (For we walk by faith, not by sight)' (2 Cor 5:6-7). Faith is the opposite of sight. The writer of Hebrews enforced this truth when he defined faith, 'Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen' (Heb 11:1). The only explicit definition of faith in the Bible is in terms of hope, and is presented as the antithesis of sight. When a Christian's faith becomes sight, it is no longer faith, the object of faith no longer has to be hoped for, it becomes experienced reality.

When prophecy, tongues and knowledge pass away; faith, hope and love will abide. Faith and hope will not abide after the coming of Christ, for at the coming of Christ, faith and hope will be fulfilled.⁶ Therefore, the perfect thing cannot be the coming of Christ. The context will not allow it.

This line of argumentation is so forceful that some of those who hold to the opinion that the perfect thing is the coming of Christ are compelled to protect their interpretation from this crippling blow. For example D A Carson wrote:

Consider hope: it is true that there is a sense in which hope is no longer needed once eternity dawns. But that is not the only sense of hope: in 1 Corinthians 15:19, for instance, Paul writes, 'If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.' Presumably in one sense Paul expects hope to continue beyond this life in the continued enjoyment of that for which we hoped; for there is a sense in which hope is not merely the anticipation of the blessings to come, an anticipation no longer needed once those blessings have arrived, but a firm anchor in Christ himself.⁷

In order to protect his interpretation, Carson made a rather amateurish attempt to prove hope extends beyond this present life. In 1 Corinthians 15:19, Paul is not using hope in a different sense from that in 1 Corinthians 13:13. There is no substantiation for this position, and the onus of proof is upon those who espouse it.

In 1 Corinthians 15:19, Paul was writing about the object of hope, the resurrection. His argument was, if the resurrection is an idea that is suggested to give a person false assurance of a life hereafter, then all who accept this illusion are pitiful, pathetic creatures. There is no suggestion contextually that Paul is maintaining the eternality of hope. Hope is not the subject of the discussion. Paul was affirming the reality of the resurrection. The use of the participle, *elpikotes* (1 Cor 15:19) in this context does not contradict, nor discount the declaration of Paul in Romans 8:24-25 that hope is only useful until the object becomes visible. To maintain that hope is used in two different senses in these passages is to ignore the biblical information on the nature of hope and faith.

The Perfect Thing as the Completed Canon

The second major interpretation is that *to teleion* is referring to the completed canon of Scripture. Of the two this is the interpretation that will allow a time for the ceasing things to have ceased while the abiding things continue to abide. Faith, hope and love will abide (and may I say have continued to abide) after the completion of the canon, but faith and hope cannot abide after the coming of Christ.

This interpretation also fits the context, if one considers the nature of the three gifts which will cease at the coming of the perfect thing. As stated earlier, prophecy, knowledge and tongues were all revelatory gifts. God gave specific, partial revelation to the Church through them. The completed canon ended the need for partial, incomplete revelation, because it is the perfect and complete revelation. The parallelism strengthens this interpretation.

The question remains, does this interpretation fit the rest of the context? In verses nine and ten, the apostle contrasted *to teleion* with prophecy which is partial. 1 Corinthians 13:9-10 reads, 'For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.' When the perfect prophecy comes, this partial prophecy will disappear. The idea of a completed revelation does not violate the context of these verses.

Does this interpretation fit verse eleven? The completed canon surely brought the Church to a true maturity in revelation, '... but when I became a man, I put away childish things.' The Holy Scriptures are the sum of the knowledge of God, and all other true prophecies in comparison are but immature and childish because they are incomplete and fractional.

Of course verse twelve is the verse in question. 'For now we see through a glass, *esoptron*, darkly, *en ainigmati*; but then face to face: now I know, *ginosko*, in part; but then shall I know, *epignosomai*, even as also I am known, *epegnosthen*.' Does the canonised Scripture meet this qualification? Does one see more clearly through the Scripture than through the partial revelation of these revelatory gifts, and can the difference be so great as to be described as seeing face to face?

At this point many of the authors of the commentary material⁸ refer to Numbers 12:6-8, 'And he said, Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the LORD will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches, *chiydah*; and the similitude of the LORD shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?' Commenting on this verse Walter J Chantry wrote;

At once we recognise the figures used in 1 Cor 13:12, a contrast between dim, partial, revelation and open, full-faced display of the Lord. Not a contrast between prophet and heaven is before us, but a contrast between lesser and greater prophet.

In the Old Testament, Moses stood as the great prophet who spoke to God 'mouth to mouth, even apparently'. Other prophets received 'dark speeches' and 'similitudes' by the obscure means of 'visions' and 'dreams'. In the New Testament Jesus Christ stands as the great prophet who dwelt in the bosom of the Father and has declared him. His full and complete revelation of the Father was inscripturated by the apostles.⁹

The fact that Chantry, like many of the commentators, affirms the connection between these two passages of Scripture strengthens the interpretation that the perfect of 1 Corinthians 13:10 is the completed canon. The connection between the obscure and vague revelation given through the prophets of the Old Testament other than Moses, and the revelation given through the revelatory gifts of 1 Corinthians 13 further demonstrates the temporal and inferior nature of this type of revelation. Therefore, it would be quite reasonable to expect the perfect thing to be the perfect revelation.

The interpretation is further strengthened by the fact that Paul knew the revelation given through him as an apostle was superior to the partial revelation of the prophets. He knew his written word was superior to, and of a different nature from, their spoken word. At 1 Corinthians 14:37 he wrote, 'If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.' Therefore, in the context of the discussion of spiritual gifts, Paul established the superiority of the written revelation of Scripture over spoken revelation. Charles Hodge wrote,

Here ... submission to the infallible authority of the apostles is made the test of a divine mission and even of conversion... The inference which Protestants draw from the fact in question is, that ... we have the infallible teaching of the prophets and the apostles in the Bible, ...¹⁰

Paul understood this fact as evidenced by his bold assertion that all prophets must agree with his written revelation, or they were to be judged as unspiritual, false prophets.

Objections to the Interpretation above

An objection to the interpretation that the perfect is the completed canon is that a discussion of the completed canon would have been out of place in this passage. The question posed is, 'Why would Paul break into a discussion of the canon in the middle of a discussion of spiritual gifts?' John MacArthur voiced

the objection as follows:

Some Christians believe the perfect has already come in the completion of the Scripture. But that idea would have been meaningless to the Corinthians. Nowhere in this letter does he mention or allude to such a scriptural completion. The Corinthian believers would have taken Paul's meaning in the plainest and simplest way: as a reference to spiritual and moral perfection, the perfection to which the Lord calls all of His people: 'Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect' (Matt 5:48, NASB).¹¹

The weakness of MacArthur's argument is apparent. He simply asserts the question as the answer. The whole debate is over what the apostle was telling the Corinthians. In answer to MacArthur's objection the question could be posed, 'Why not enter into a discussion of the completeness of revelation to come?' Paul is in the middle of explaining the fact that partial revelation is a ceasing thing not to be considered on a par with love. He further references Numbers 12: 6-8, which is clearly a passage concerning contrasting types of revelation. It is a natural progression of argument to contrast partial revelation with perfect revelation here, for Paul himself raises the issue as an example of his point that love is superior to the gifts these Corinthians were seeking.

Further, MacArthur's interpretation begs the question. The question is not, 'Why should the apostle enter into a discussion of revelation?' The question is, after entering into the discussion of revelation, 'What is the perfect thing to which he is referring?' A logical answer is the perfection of revelation itself. The apostle enters into this discussion to illustrate his point of the superiority of love over the other gifts the Corinthians were seeking. He chooses to use the example of revelatory gifts (this is not willy-nilly, for ultimately these are not the words of Paul, but the Word of God) to demonstrate the inferiority of these gifts when compared to love. Therefore, it seems extremely logical to complete his example by pointing the Corinthians to the perfection of revelation to come and then, after completing the presentation of his example, returning to the theme of the chapter, love.

Conclusion

The interpretation of 1 Corinthians 13:8-13 has become in the last several decades very controversial and hotly contested. Many interpreters come to the question of its interpretation with their minds firmly fixed upon a position concerning cessation and determined to use this passage to defend their position. The author of this article does not claim to be neutral on the subject either. However, one must always allow the Scripture to inform his interpretation, not vice versa. Study the argument before you based on sound exegesis, not upon a defence of a position.

Also be careful to study this passage in the complete context of biblical theology. All interpretations have implications and consequences beyond the immediate passage. Therefore the immediate context must be studied in light of the larger context of biblical truth. If one continues to claim, based on 1 Corinthians 13, the legitimacy of additional contemporary revelation, what does that say about the nature of the Holy Scriptures, and how can the authority, the infallibility, and the inerrancy of the Bible be maintained? The greater question is not, 'Is the gift of prophecy operating today?' but, 'Do we have a sure word of prophecy in the Bible?' The answer to the latter will be of necessity opposite to the answer to the former.

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2. Charles Hodge has an excellent discussion of this in his commentary, *An Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids 1980, pp248-52.
3. *Ibid* p250.
4. Owen, *Holy Spirit*, p460.
5. *Meizon* is the comparative of *mezas*. The superlative is *megistos*. C K Barrett suggested that Paul may have used the comparative degree because he was setting love over against faith and hope as a unit, but he ultimately favoured the reason as being the fact that the superlative was rarely used in Hellenistic Greek, occurring only once in the New Testament at 2 Peter 1:4. Paul Ellingworth and Howard Hatton believed Paul was employing the common practice of using the comparative in the superlative sense as in 12:31 where the comparative *meizon* was used with the superlative sense. vide C K Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Harper & Row Publishers, New York and Evanston 1968, p311; and Paul Ellingworth and Howard Hatton, *A Translator's Handbook on Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians*, United Bible Societies, London, New York, and Stuttgart, 1985, p264.
6. Love will continue to abide after the coming of Christ, as Paul demonstrated in pointing out the superior nature of love over faith and hope in the text, 'but the greatest of these is love'.
7. D A Carson, *Theological Exposition of 1 Corinthians 12-14*.
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