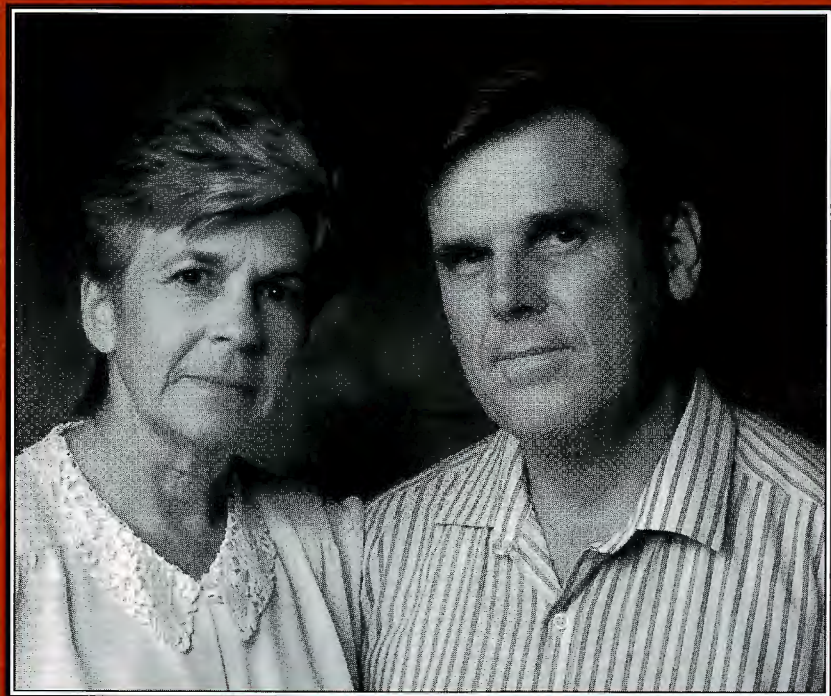
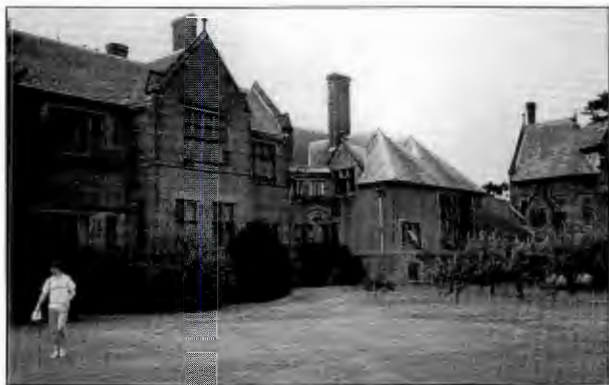


REFORMATION TODAY



MAY/JUNE 1996

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Cloverley Hall

The Carey Family Conference 5/10 August 1996. Cloverley Hall Conference Centre Shropshire

Main conference speaker: Richard Chester

Other speakers: Keith Underhill of Kenya, Stephen Rees, John Palmer
 Andrew King and Erroll Hulse.

The conference caters not just for families but also for single people and for seniors. There are facilities for the disabled. This year it will be possible to book in from Saturday 3rd if desired, staying at the centre informally for the weekend. There is a local Reformed fellowship at nearby Whitchurch. The main conference begins with the Monday evening meeting. There are facilities for caravans and tents with the option of booking in for some or all meals.

There will be morning and evening teaching sessions with the afternoons free to explore the local countryside or join organised walks or games. The Hall has extensive grounds, heated outdoor swimming pool, games room, playing fields and tennis courts.

Optional seminars on theological and practical subjects as well as seminars tailored to the needs of teenagers are planned. Children will be well catered for with crèche, children's meetings and activities.

For further details and booking forms please contact:

*David Jarrett, Penglais, 6a Soar Close, Croesyceilog, Cwmbran,
 Gwent NP44 2PD. Tel 01633 866214.*

Front cover: *Martin and Beryl Holdt. Martin was main speaker at this year's Banner of Truth Ministers' Conference (see p40). In spite of serious illness, Beryl accompanied him from South Africa. Their son Jonathan is a student at London Theological Seminary and was also at the conference.*

Editorial

Have you been baptised with the Holy Spirit? What is your response to this question? My usual reply to this challenge is, Yes I have been baptised into the three Persons of the Trinity, but if you are asking about spiritual experiences yes I could talk about that too.

Is this subject a matter of relevance?

If a world-wide plebiscite were held on the question of the baptism of the Spirit as a post-conversion experience what would the result be?

The question in the plebiscite: Do you believe that the baptism of the Spirit is a necessary post-conversion experience in order to be a fully-fledged Christian? Yes or No?

That this issue is a central one is reflected in the book *Operation World* in which, for almost every country, Pentecostal and Charismatic statistics are reported as a separate item alongside the total evangelical estimate. In these editorial observations I will mostly cite statistics given in *Operation World*.

China. It may be that there are as many true Christians in China as there are in both North and South America put together. The latest careful reckoning is that there are between 19 and 30 million Protestants in China. Doctrinal distinctives are very difficult to ascertain for outsiders so it is difficult to know what the position is with regard to Pentecostal teaching.

India. About 36 percent of the Bible believers are Pentecostal.

Indonesia. My reckoning is that 42 percent of the evangelical constituency (about 3.8 million) would vote yes.

Brazil. Of 12 million, 91 percent are Pentecostal.

Nigeria. Of five million professing evangelicals about 65 percent are Pentecostal.

Korea. Of 3,800,000 evangelicals about 20 percent are Pentecostal.

Nations with the largest evangelical constituencies look like this:

	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
India	1,364,000	2,236,000
USA ¹	4,857,000	7,478,000
Indonesia	2,700,000	996,000
Brazil	11,000,000	1,558,000
Nigeria	3,224,000	1,669,000
Korea	743,000	3,075,000
Philippines	954,000	730,000
Mexico	1,119,000	828,000
South Africa	1,931,000	1,487,000
Chile	2,060,000	114,000
Ethiopia	421,000	2,354,000
<i>Totals</i>	30,373,000	22,525,000

On this reckoning for every 30 who would vote yes to the idea of the baptism of the Spirit as a needful if not essential post-conversion experience, approximately 22 would be of the opposite view. Expressed as a percentage this calculation shows that about 57 percent of evangelicals in the world are Pentecostal and would believe in the baptism of the Holy Spirit as a mandatory post-conversion experience.

A minority of Pentecostals do not follow the traditional Pentecostal line. For instance while strenuously insisting on the continuation of the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, the Vineyard group of churches (John Wimber) reject the traditional Pentecostal idea of a post-conversion baptism of the Holy Spirit. This position is expounded clearly in Wayne Grudem's *Systematic Theology* (see review in *RT* 144). Concerning the suggested statistics above, it must be borne in mind that many within mainline denominations are Pentecostal and believe in the Pentecostal idea of the baptism of the Spirit.

Nevertheless it is easy to see that this is a vital issue in modern evangelicalism and important for three reasons:

- i Holding to a post-conversion experience is divisive and creates a two-tier Christianity with inevitable superiority and inferiority.
- ii It diminishes the glory of union with Christ by faith, implying that there is something else we still need.
- iii It is often associated with a triumphalistic view of the Christian life, as if struggling and discipline are 'unspiritual' and may be overcome by a further experience.

Each IRFB member should have received from Chapel Library a complimentary copy of *Adoniram Judson and the Missionary Call* by Erroll Hulse. Fifty percent trade terms are available from Chapel Library, 2603 West Wright St. PENSACOLA, FL 32505, USA. The retail price is four dollars. Retail price in UK £2.95. Copies available from Evangelical Press, 12 Wooler St., DARLINGTON, Co. Durham DL1 1RQ.

We maintain firmly that baptism in the Spirit is a *conversion* experience. The theme is developed in my article in this issue. While rejecting any quest for *post-conversion* Spirit baptism, we strenuously emphasise the need to be filled with the Spirit, which is expounded in the same article.

Samuel Pearce and our Reformed Baptist Inheritance

Samuel Pearce who died aged 33, belonged to the fraternity of William Carey, Andrew Fuller and John Sutcliff. Besides being an important part of our history Pearce's life is full of instruction. As Michael Haykin shows, Pearce testified to joy inexpressible in his conversion. It is from his struggles and disappointments, and ultimately his testimony in death, that we learn the most.

It is vital that we keep track of our legacies. Our heritage is like a garden to be kept in trim, not forgotten, nor allowed to be over-run by weeds. Compared with the way in which the publication of the *London Baptist Confession* in 1689 was commemorated at its 300th anniversary, the Presbyterians outstripped the Reformed Baptist constituency completely in the way they commemorated the Westminster Assembly in 1993. This is reflected in the beautifully produced Banner of Truth volume, *To Glorify and Enjoy God*,² being the substance of papers commemorating the Westminster Assembly. Our lack of material will be ameliorated by the soon expected publication of Dr Haykin's book *Knollys, Kiffin and Keach*.³ Dr Haykin's book *One Heart and One Soul*⁴ provides the broader canvas into which the life of Samuel Pearce fits.

Footnotes

1. Due to the tendency to inflate statistics in the USA, I have used an independent assessment.
2. Ed J L Carson and D W Hall, *To Glorify and Enjoy God - A Commemoration of the Westminster Assembly*, Banner of Truth, Edinburgh & Carlisle, PA, 1994, pp338.
3. Due to appear shortly as a Carey title, published by Reformation Today Trust.
4. Michael A G Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul - John Sutcliff of Olney, his friends and his times*, E P, Darlington, UK, 1994, pp431.

Rediscovering the Lost Treasure of Family Worship

Jerry Marcellino

What will return modern-day Christendom to a Christianity that will act as a preserving agent in a decaying society? What can offer certain hope to a nation of families that are in utter disarray?

Answer: A present return to the old paths. It was the prophet Jeremiah who said; *'Ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is, and walk in it; and you shall find rest for your souls.'* Included in the 'ancient paths' is family worship.

There are four reasons why we should seek to restore family worship

1. We are stewards of God's gifts
2. Our children are placed in our homes by sovereign design
3. Family worship prepares us for public worship
4. As a witness to a nation in decline Joshua declared:

Now therefore, fear the Lord and serve Him in sincerity and truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. And if it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the Lord, *choose for yourselves today whom you will serve*: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; *but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord* (Joshua 24:14, 15).

Three key elements that should be included in family worship:

Song

The Lord is to be worshipped in song. Psalm 69:30 says, 'I will praise the name of God with song, and shall magnify Him with thanksgiving.'

In family worship we should lead our family in singing to the Lord because he is pleased when we praise him! For those who feel they cannot sing or are not musically inclined, there are resources available to assist you in making music a vital part of your daily worship time. Sing often the songs that your children are learning in Sunday School and on other occasions with their peers. The Psalms,



*Jerry and Dawn Marcellino with Cassie, Elyse, Johnson, Joshua and Jeremiah.
Jerry is pastor of the Audubon Baptist Church, Laurel, MS*

hymns and spiritual songs which are often sung in the public worship services of your church should also be sung. In fact, if more families sang the praises of God together in their homes, just think how much our congregational singing on the Lord's Day might improve! Another good idea is to conclude each family worship time together with singing the doxology or some other praise-filled chorus. Martin Luther demonstrated how important he felt music was in the worship of God, whether it was offered at home or among the gathered assembly, when he said, 'Next to the Word of God music deserves the highest praise!'

Scripture

Scriptural instruction is to be central. The Word of God is to be central in family worship. Here our goal should be to help the members of our family to develop a love for God's Word, with the hope that they will begin to live upon every word of it (Matt. 4:4). Remember that God's Word is to be taught reverently and creatively, as well as with much animation. Strive never to bore your children with your delivery of God's Word to them. Be thoughtful how you illustrate or paint pictures of the main points. Ask them plenty of easy questions (laced with a few difficult ones to make them think hard!). You will be surprised to find that children are very able to stay with you as you teach. Hold the standard high, and God will bring them to it. Labour to make each teaching time a lesson for them to remember.

There are a variety of ways God's Word can be conveyed to your family:

1. By direct reading from the Bible according to a plan.
2. By reading from a sound Bible story book.

3. Through the use of a catechism, a very successful method of teaching biblical truths by simple questions and answers.
4. Through Scripture memory and review.
5. By reading from a good devotional commentary.
6. By reading through solid Christian classics like *The Pilgrim's Progress*. (Make sure your Bibles are in front of you, to explore the scriptural truths that will jump from every page!)

Some fathers may feel inadequate in this area; but where God has given responsibility, he also provides the ability to accomplish. For the father who is truly committed, where there is a will, there is a way!

Supplication

Supplications are to be offered in Jesus' name. We are to teach our children to pray not only by example from the very words we use in our prayers, but also by supplying them with information to be prayed about. Pray often for the needs of your family and extended family (especially the unsaved), for the needs of families in your local congregation, the spiritual needs of our nation, and for the dire needs of a lost world (both locally and internationally). And the list goes on and on! Remember that we are teaching our children to take little steps toward God as we illustrate our own dependence upon him in prayer.

When children see parents who are constantly poring over the Scriptures and going to God in prayer about everything, parents who have a proper balance between the enjoyment of legitimate recreation and seeking to conform to everything that would bring glory to God, those children can be expected to adopt that same balance. Whatever or whoever is precious to you, the same will be precious to your children.

Notice this principle that can be drawn from 1 Timothy 4:16 and applied to every parent:

Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things; for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you.

All Scripture quotations are taken from the *New American Standard Bible*.

This article has been taken from a more detailed booklet with the same title published by Audubon Press, Box 8055, Laurel, MS 39441-8000, USA.

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit

Editor

For we were all baptised by one Spirit into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free - and we were all given the one Spirit to drink
(1 Cor 12:13).

What precisely is the baptism of the Spirit? Is it an experience? Is it a momentous spiritual event? And what does it mean to drink the Spirit? How can we drink God?

Two matching verbs in the above text dictate its meaning: *ebaptisthemen* and *epotisthemen* tell us of something that has occurred in every believer's life. The historical reality of what occurred in conversion is stressed. You *were* baptised in the Spirit and you *were* made to drink of the Spirit.

The first verb refers to baptism in the Spirit and the second to life in the Spirit. We will now look at each of these.

What is it to be baptised in the Spirit?

The term baptism is used in a figurative or metaphorical way. Baptism literally means to be plunged in or immersed in water. Used metaphorically it denotes something complete. It is used to describe being translated from one sphere into another. Thus the children of Israel were all baptised into Moses in the sea (1 Cor 10:2). They were taken out of one sphere and from one dominion into another world and placed under a new leader. The figurative way in which Jesus uses the term baptism points to something overwhelming. I refer to the time that he declared that he had a baptism of suffering to endure (Mark 10:38).

There are seven references in the New Testament to baptism of the Spirit. Four are in the Gospels, two in Acts and the one stated above, 1 Corinthians 12:13.

In the Gospels there is the promise that Jesus would baptise in the Spirit (Matt 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33). The two references in Acts are 1:5 and 11:16. 'For John baptised with water, but before many days you shall be

baptised with the Holy Spirit' (Acts 1:5). In the home of Cornelius, Peter saw the effects of the outpouring of the Spirit and remembered the promise of the baptism in the Spirit (Acts 11:16). All these references concern the same thing. The seventh reference (1 Cor 12:13) is cited above. The preposition used in each and every case is 'in': 'in' the Spirit (Greek *en*). *En* with *baptizein* never designates the one who performs the baptism but always the element in which the one baptised is immersed. This is important because there is no case for making out that there are two kinds of baptism of the Spirit, one by the Spirit and the other in the Spirit. English versions translate 1 Corinthians 12:13 *by one Spirit* (NIV, RSV, NASB, KJV, NKJV). The Greek is *in* one Spirit.

In each case Christ is the baptiser, the Holy Spirit is the element, the believers are the subjects and the outcome is the possession of the gift of the person and work of the Holy Spirit.

At this point it will help to clarify the three uses of baptism.

1. The baptism of the Holy Spirit

- i The instrument - Christ
- ii The subject - believers
- iii The element or substance - the Holy Spirit
- iv The outcome - believers are assured of the gift of the person and work of the Holy Spirit.

The fulfilment of the promise of the Spirit is seen in the book of Acts (see question 3 at end of this article).

2. Baptism into Christ

This is the spiritual baptism described in Romans 6:4-6; Colossians 2:11,12; Galatians 3:26-4:7 and Ephesians 5:5.

We analyse again as follows:

- i The instrument - the Holy Spirit
- ii The subject - believers
- iii The element - Christ
- iv The outcome - union with Christ and union with each other.

We should note that in Romans 6:4-6 comprehensive union with Christ in his

death, burial and resurrection is stressed. In the parallel passage, Colossians, 'having been buried with him in baptism', the new birth (spiritual circumcision) and the believer's faith are emphasised. The Galatians passage, 'for all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ', concentrates on the union of all believers irrespective of race, rank, gender or employment. The new birth; union with Christ; baptism into him are different ways of referring to the initiation of salvation. Each carries a different distinct emphasis.

3. The believer's baptism in water

- i The instrument - the minister
- ii The subject - the believer
- iii The element - water
- iv The outcome - confirmation of union with Christ, union with the Trinity, the washing away of sin, and walking in newness of life.

Examples: The 3,000 on the day of Pentecost; the converts at Samaria; the eunuch; Saul of Tarsus; the households of Lydia, the Philippian gaoler and Crispus; the disciples at Ephesus and many Corinthians. In every case the emphasis is on faith.

The baptismal formula given by Jesus in the Great Commission (Matt 28:19) tells us that baptism into Christ is, at the same time, baptism into union with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

What is it to drink the Spirit?

And we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

The twin aorist verbs refer to the simultaneous events of baptism in the Spirit and drinking the Spirit. This refers to the initial giving of the Holy Spirit to indwell our lives. To drink of the Spirit is to be filled with the life of God. The giving of the Spirit is the fulfilment of the promise of Jesus:

On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, 'If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.' By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed were later to receive.

To drink this life of the Spirit is to enjoy eternal life. It is described as fullness of life (John 10:10). This life is like a well springing up in the heart like that

stream described in Ezekiel 47:1-11, water bringing healing and fruitfulness wherever it flows. The waters are restorative and they fertilise the barren spaces. To drink of the Spirit is to experience irrepressible joy and inexpressible gladness. To have been blind but now to have sight is an experience of sheer elation. To have been deaf but now to understand and enjoy the truth is to experience delight. To have lived in darkness but now to be blessed with light is to know exultation. The joy that comes from drinking the Spirit brings strength. Feeble hands are strengthened, weak knees are made strong. The joy of the Lord is our strength (Neh 8:10).

This joy has its inception in the discovery of the kingdom of heaven as described in the 'Gem' parables of the Treasure and the Pearl.

The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field which a man found and hid; and carried away by his joy he goes and sells absolutely everything he has and buys that field.

Again the kingdom of heaven is like a businessman seeking beautiful pearls; and when he found the one particular pearl of immense worth he went out and sold absolutely everything he had and bought it (Matt 13:44-46; F D Bruner's translation of the Greek text in his commentary on *Matthew*, Word Publishing).

The main point in both these parables is the joy of the gospel. Both men are carried away by joy (*apo tes charas autou*). The discovery fills the horizon of the farmer and the businessman. They both sell absolutely everything they have. The discovery represents the gospel which is of inestimable value. To enter into the blessings of the gospel is to drink the Spirit. Here is the key to understanding the greatest sacrifices made by missionaries. They have discovered the treasure that is Christ. Having been baptised into him they have drunk the Spirit and found that this life is the only life, as Paul testifies, 'I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things' (Phil 3:8).

A word of caution is needed because there are many believers who cannot say that their conversion was accompanied with exultant feelings. Many have come with a struggle and with doubt. But nevertheless the Holy Spirit enables them to live for Christ. Some lack assurance and are troubled by falling short, for example, of the expressions of Paul in Romans 8:15,16. Some feel they live more in character with Romans 7 than Romans 8. But it is not a case of one or the other. All believers know what it is to experience fluctuations: spiritual ups and downs. Allowance must be made for diversity of experience.

What is it to be filled with the Holy Spirit?

The baptism of the Spirit is initiatory. It occurs once and for all. Filling with the Spirit is repeated. Filling with the Spirit is for all Christians at all times.

The main objection to Reformed teaching on the subject of the baptism of the Holy Spirit in the minds of Pentecostal believers is that it negates the idea of power and spiritual experience. It is important therefore to observe what the New Testament teaches concerning the all-round work of the Holy Spirit and particularly what it declares about the fulness of the Spirit.

Being filled with the Spirit or the idea of the fulness of the Spirit is employed in two ways. The first refers to the general demeanour or character of a person. The perfect exemplar of this is Jesus himself. Luke tells us that Jesus was full of the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:1). Stephen the martyr was filled with the Holy Spirit and shone with the character of Christ as he preached and as he died. This disposition of power to triumph over death and rise above the greatest enemy of all is illustrated over and over again by the martyrs. For instance John Bradford in the face of being burned alive at the stake turned to the young man (only nineteen years old) sentenced to die alongside him, and said, "Be of good comfort, brother, we shall have a merry supper with the Lord this night!"

John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb which points to the marvellous power of his life, preaching and fearless witness which resulted in his martyrdom. It was required of the seven deacons chosen by the congregation in Jerusalem that they have a disposition which was in accord with 'being full of the Spirit and wisdom' (Acts 6:3). Barnabas was described as 'a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith' a man used in the ministry for the text adds, 'a great number of people were brought to the Lord' (Acts 11:24).

The second way in which we understand the fulness of the Spirit has to do with special occasions or special works. Elizabeth and Zecharias (Luke 1:41, 67) were filled with the Holy Spirit so that they might prophesy and speak the very words of God. Reported in Acts 4:31 is the fact that, 'After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.' This was different to Pentecost because Pentecost was characterised by a unique combination of phenomena. There is nothing to preclude similar happenings to that described in Acts 4:31 today. Indeed instances of power imparted and special enablings adorn revival literature. The extensive Moravian missionary enterprise is traced back to an outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Herrnhut in Saxony (see article by Prof

Haykin, *RT150*). Another instance is recorded in the ministry of Presbyterian minister John Girardeau in South Carolina. During the period of the 1859 revival during times specially set apart for prayer for revival the Holy Spirit fell on him and on his congregation. This marked the beginning of an eight week revival.¹

An instance in which the apostle was filled with the Spirit is recorded in Acts 13:9, 'Then Saul, who was called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit looked straight at Elymas and said, You are a child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right!' Paul was empowered in this instance to face up to the unpleasant task of denouncing a deceitful man.

We must not confine the fulness of the Spirit with extraordinary efforts. The fulness of the Spirit has to do with the mundane and ordinary. We need to be filled with the Spirit when we have to plod and when we have to bear reproach or misunderstanding. We need to emphasise more the filling of the Spirit for endurance of hardship and perseverance in severe and painful trials. To bear suffering with joy and patience glorifies God. Pioneer missionary Adoniram Judson and his wife Ann exemplified the filling of the Spirit in the patient endurance of the most severe tribulations. The same can be said of the Moravian missionaries.

Paul says, 'Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead be filled with the Spirit' (Eph 5:18). This exhortation seems strange since it is not the habit of those in Christ to be drunk with alcohol. The overall context suggests that the reference is to the former habits of many in the church at Ephesus. But more, it is suggestive of dominion. With alcohol a mindless, hedonistic power takes control. By way of complete contrast, the Holy Spirit takes control of the Christian and has dominion over all his faculties and especially giving him self-control.

Paul goes on to suggest that being filled with the Spirit is evidenced by mutual edification in worship, especially in singing. To be filled with the Spirit is evidenced too when we are thankful and when we gladly and patiently submit to each other in our responsibilities in the church and in the home.

1. For a full description of this event see *Let's Pray for Global Revival* obtainable from Chapel Library, 2603 West Wright Street, Pensacola FL 32505, USA.

Questions

1. How do the New Testament epistles interpret the baptism of the Spirit?

As we have seen, 1 Corinthians 12:13 states categorically that all believers are baptised in the Spirit and are partakers of the Holy Spirit. Hence Paul declares, 'If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!' (2 Cor 5:17). Similarly Paul describes believers as 'God's workman-ship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do' (Eph 2:10). When I was baptised into Christ and joined to him, at that very moment, I was created anew.

Spiritual union with Christ is the outcome of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. That union represents unity in his death, burial and resurrection, and as a result brings the remission of sin. Union with Christ means that we have his righteousness on which basis the Father justifies us. Union with Christ means that we are united to him in his present life-giving power so that we derive from him all we need for the work of progressive sanctification.

Romans 8:1-27 describes life lived in the Spirit. Three main areas of the Spirit's work are outlined; enablement to mortify sin; a direct work of assurance; and enablement to pray in adverse circumstances.

Chronic problems existed in the church at Corinth yet at no point is a special experience suggested as an answer. Rather each problem is addressed specifically and in the second letter the Corinthians are reminded of their resources in Christ: 'Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come' (2 Cor 1:21).

Peter in his second letter exhorts believers to add to their faith: goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, love (2 Peter 1:5-8). If a second experience were essential he surely would mention this but he does not.

2. What about special experiences?

The experience of love, joy and peace are referred to as the norm (Rom 5; 1 Pet 1:8). In contrast the apostle Paul testifies to the extraordinary: he was caught up to the third heaven (2 Cor 12:2). Yet he was determined to boast, not in special experiences, but rather in his weakness (2 Cor 12:5,9).

Christians sometimes leap forward in their experience because they discover the power of truth. It may be the sheer wonder of sovereign grace: why me? Or it may be the sheer joy of a free justification. It may be the experience in a powerful way of God's presence in tribulation. God meets us in our need. We are always exhorted in Scripture to seek *him*, not an experience *per se*.

Experience certainly was involved in Pentecost. The disciples were wonderfully empowered. Yet reference is never made to Pentecost in experimental terms. Certainly, the Samaritans, the members of Cornelius' household, and the twelve men at Ephesus would remember vividly the day the Holy Spirit came upon them. We must not neglect the experimental dimensions of these momentous events. At the same time we must hold fast to the way in which the apostles themselves understood and interpreted these historic events.

3. What about the four instances reported in Acts?

It is important to view the events from the position of a first-century Jewish believer rather than as a 20th-century believer conditioned by familiarity with current Pentecostal practice.

When the gospel was preached at Samaria by Philip, the apostles Peter and John went to see the work. They laid their hands on the Samaritan believers and they received the Holy Spirit. There was a cleavage between the Jews and the Samaritans and it was essential that there be proof of the inclusion of the Samaritans in the body of Christ. Similarly with the household of Cornelius it was vital that there be proof of their inclusion as Gentiles. That is precisely how Peter argued the case before the apostles in Jerusalem (Acts 11:18). It ended the objections and they praised God that he had given repentance to the Gentiles. They did not respond by saying, "Wow! That was a great experience!" Likewise at the Council of Jerusalem, Peter defended the inclusion of the Gentiles on account of the Holy Spirit being given to them. He equated the giving of the Spirit with purification of their hearts by faith (Acts 15:9). He did not boast about Cornelius having a wonderful mystical experience. Finally in the instance of the twelve very ignorant seekers described in Acts 19:1-7, the issue of their receiving the Holy Spirit and of the Trinity was settled when they were converted.

4. How do we receive the Holy Spirit?

We receive the Holy Spirit in the same way as we receive Christ, that is by faith. Hence Paul writing to the Galatians asks, 'Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard?' We do not receive the Spirit by tarrying meetings, or by laying on of hands, or by attempts to create emotional experience. At Pentecost the gift of the Holy Spirit was promised to those who repented and believed (Acts 2:38).

5. How do we know that we have the baptism of the Spirit?

We know that we have been baptised in the Spirit because he, the Spirit, indwells us. 'And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us' (1 John 3:24).

To have the gift of the person of the Holy Spirit in the entirety of his divine character is immense. He who has baptised us into Christ and into the body of the Church now embraces every part of our affections and of our minds. He convicts of sin, he empowers to mortify that sin, he teaches us, guides us and comforts us. He makes us fruitful with the marks of love, joy, peace, patience, faithfulness and gentleness.

Consider the glory of this divine person who indwells our hearts. Consider the immensity of that comfort which is ours through his ministry in our times of tribulation and ultimately in the last great struggle when we have to cross the river Jordan. The emblems of the Spirit remind us of his power and beauty. He is the dove of peace, he is the wind that resurrects to life, he is the oil that heals, he is the water of life. He has set his seal of ownership upon us.

There is no restraint as far as he is concerned. We are urged to be filled with the Spirit. We must not grieve him. He lives in us. Paul prays ‘that you may be filled to the measure of all the fulness of God’ (Eph 3:19).

6. Was Pentecost a revival?

About 9:00 am on the Lord’s Day, Pentecost, fifty days after the Passover, the age of the Spirit was ushered in. The Old had passed. The New had come. From the messianic promises given in the Old Testament we discern that this age of the Spirit is to be an age when the Holy Spirit is poured out, not only initially but over and over again in different nations and at different times.

Special note must be made of power. Jesus promised, ‘You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you.’ That power of the Spirit was shown in boldness, clarity and authority in preaching. The disciples were given power to witness fearlessly to the truth about Jesus.

That power has been given over and over again in the history of the Church but especially in times of revival. The book of Acts is a book describing the acts of the Holy Spirit. Today we have a library of books which document outpourings of the Holy Spirit in revival. There have been times of spiritual awakening when Christ has been preached and multitudes brought to repentance and faith. Pentecost was unique in many ways. It was the first revival. Countless revivals have followed since then.

Conclusion

The experience of conversion described in various ways in the New Testament is consistently magnified and urged as the stupendous work of grace upon which all believers are to build. No post-conversion experience is suggested, commended, held out or commanded in the New Testament. No single crisis experience is promised, nor commended as something to seek. Rather believers are directed to draw on all the advantages of union with the Trinity.

The Spirituality of Samuel Pearce

Michael A G Haykin

Scarcely known today, Samuel Pearce (1766-1799) was in his own day well known for the anointing that attended his preaching and the depth of his spirituality. It was said of him that 'his ardour . . . gave him a kind of ubiquity; as a man and a preacher, he was known, he was felt everywhere.' William Jay (1769-1853), who exercised an influential ministry in Bath for the first half of the nineteenth century, said of his contemporary's preaching: 'When I have endeavoured to form an image of our Lord as a preacher, Pearce has oftener presented himself to my mind than any other I have been acquainted with.' He had, Jay went on, a 'mildness and tenderness' in his style of preaching, and a 'peculiar unction'. When Jay wrote these words it was many years after Pearce's death, but still, he said, he could see his appearance in his mind's eye and feel the impression that he made upon his hearers as he preached. Ever one to appreciate the importance of having spiritual individuals as one's friends, Jay has this comment about the last time that he saw Pearce alive: 'What a savour does communion with such a man leave upon the spirit.'



Samuel Pearce

David Bogue and James Bennett, in their history of the Dissenting interest in England up to the early nineteenth century, have similar remarks about Pearce. When he preached, they said, 'the most careless were attentive, the most prejudiced became favourable, and the coldest felt that, in spite of themselves, they began to kindle.' But it was when he prayed in public, they remarked, that Pearce's spiritual ardour was most apparent. Then the 'most devout were so elevated beyond their former heights, that they said, "We scarcely ever seemed to pray before."' In fact, for some decades after his death it was not uncommon to hear him referred to as the 'seraphic Pearce'.

Formative Years, 1766-1789

Pearce was born in Plymouth on 20 July 1766 to devout Baptist parents.

Despite a good upbringing by his godly father, William Pearce and an equally devout grandfather - his mother died when he was but an infant - it was not until 1782, his sixteenth year, that he experienced the joys of conversion. According to Pearce's own testimony, after his conversion he was especially conscious of the Spirit's witness within his heart that he was a child of God and of being 'filled with peace and joy unspeakable'. A year or so later, on the day when he celebrated his seventeenth birthday, he was baptised and joined the Plymouth congregation in which he had been raised. It was not long after his baptism that the church perceived that Pearce had been endowed with definite gifts that marked him out as one called to pastoral ministry. So, in November of 1785, when he was only nineteen years of age and serving as an apprentice to his father who was a silversmith, Pearce received a call from the church to enter into the ministry of the Word.

The church recommended that Pearce first pursue a course of study at the Bristol Baptist Academy. From August 1786 to May 1789 Pearce thus studied at what was then the sole Baptist institution in Great Britain for the training of ministers for the Calvinistic Baptist denomination. The benefits afforded by this period of study were ones for which Pearce was ever grateful. There was, for example, the privilege of studying under Caleb Evans (1737-1791), the Principal of the Academy, and Robert Hall, Jr (1764-1831) - the former a key figure in the late eighteenth-century Calvinistic Baptist community and the latter a reputed genius and one who was destined to become one of the great preachers of the early decades of the next century. Then there were the opportunities for the students to preach and try their wings, as it were. A number of years later Pearce recalled one occasion when he went to preach among the colliers of Coleford, Gloucestershire. Standing on a three-legged stool in a hut, he directed thirty or forty of these miners to 'the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world'. 'Such an unction from above' attended his preaching that day that the entirety of his hearers were melted into tears and he too, weeping among them, 'could scarcely speak . . . for interrupting sighs and sobs'. Finally, there was the rich fellowship to be enjoyed with fellow students. Among the latter, one in particular became a very close friend, William Steadman (1764-1837), later to play a central role in Baptist renewal in the north of England.

Cannon Street Baptist Church, Birmingham, 1789-1799

Early in 1789 Pearce received and accepted a call to serve for a year's

probation as the pastor of Cannon Street Baptist Church in Birmingham. He had supplied the Birmingham pulpit the previous summer as well as over the Christmas vacation. Impressed by Pearce's evangelistic zeal - a number were saved on both occasions - along with his ability to edify God's people, the church sent their request to him in early February 1789. Five weeks later Pearce wrote back consenting to their request, and by June, his studies finished, he was with them. The following year he was formally called to be the pastor of what would turn out to be his only pastoral charge. In his letter of acceptance, written on 18 July 1790, he told the Birmingham Baptists that he hoped the union between pastor and church would be for God's glory, for the good of precious souls, for their prosperity as a church, and for his prosperity as their minister. It is noteworthy that he placed God's glory in first place. If there was any concern that set the fundamental tone for his ministry it was this desire to see God glorified in his life and labours.

His ministry at Cannon Street occupied ten all-too-brief years, yet they were ones of great fruitfulness. No less than 335 individuals were baptised during his ministry and received into the membership of Cannon Street. This figure does not include those converted under his preaching who, for one reason or another, did not join themselves to the Birmingham cause. A Sunday School was started in 1795 and soon grew to the point that some 1200 scholars were enrolled in it.

At the heart of his preaching and spirituality was that key-note of evangelicalism, the mercy of God displayed in the cross of Christ. Writing one Sunday afternoon to William Summers, a friend then residing in London, Pearce told him that he had for his sermon that evening 'the best subject of all in the Bible, Ephesians 1:7 - Redemption! how welcome to the captive! Forgiveness! how delightful to the guilty! Grace! how pleasant to the heart of a saved sinner!' Christ's atoning death for sinners, he went on to say, is 'the leading truth in the N T . . . a doctrine I cannot but venerate; and to the Author of such a redemption my whole soul labours to exhaust itself in praise.' And in his final letter to his congregation, written on 31 May 1799, he reminded them that the gospel which he had preached among them for ten years and in which he urged them to stand fast was 'the gospel of the grace of God; the gospel of free, full, everlasting salvation, founded on the sufferings and death of God manifest in the flesh'.

A great support to Pearce throughout his pastorate at Cannon Street was his closest friend, his wife Sarah. A third-generation Baptist, Sarah had met

Pearce soon after his arrival in Birmingham, and they were married on 2 February 1791. Pearce's love for his wife clearly deepened with the passing of the years. Three and a half years after their marriage, he wrote to her from Plymouth: 'O, my Sarah, had I as much proof of my love to Christ as I have of my love to you, I should prize it above rubies.' And when Pearce was away from his wife the following year, 1795, on a preaching trip in London, he wrote to tell her that 'every day improves not only my tenderness but my *esteem* for you'. In another letter written a few days before this one, he called her 'the dearest of women - my invaluable Sarah'.

'An instrument of establishing the empire of my dear Lord'

One leading characteristic of Pearce's spirituality has already been noted, namely, its crucicentrism. 'Christ crucified', his good friend Andrew Fuller (1754-1815) wrote of him, 'was his darling theme, from first to last.' A second prominent feature of his spirituality was a passion for the salvation of his fellow human beings. This passion is strikingly revealed in an incident that took place when he was asked to preach at the opening of a Baptist meeting-house in Guilsborough, Northamptonshire, in May 1794. Pearce had spoken in the morning on Psalm 76:10 'Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain'. Later that day, during the midday meal, it was quite evident from the conversation that was going on at the dinner tables that Pearce's sermon had been warmly appreciated. It was thus no surprise when Pearce was asked if he would be willing to preach again the following morning. 'If you will find a congregation,' Pearce responded, 'I will find a sermon.' It was agreed to have the sermon at 5 am so that a number of farm labourers could come who wanted to hear Pearce preach and who would have to be at their tasks early in the morning.

After Pearce had preached the second time, and he was sitting at breakfast with a few others, including Andrew Fuller, the latter remarked to Pearce how pleased he had been with the content of his friend's sermon. But, he went on to say, it seemed to him that Pearce's sermon was poorly structured. 'I thought,' Fuller told his friend, 'you did not seem to close when you had really finished. I wondered that, contrary to what is usual with you, you seemed, as it were, to begin again at the end - how was it?' Pearce's response was terse: 'It was so; but I had my reason.' 'Well then, come, let us have it,' Fuller jovially responded. Pearce was quite reluctant to divulge the reason, but after a further entreaty from Fuller, he consented and said:

'Well, my brother, you shall have the secret, if it must be so. Just at the

moment I was about to resume my seat, thinking I had finished, the door opened, and I saw a poor man enter, of the working class; and from the sweat on his brow, and the symptoms of his fatigue, I conjectured that he had walked some miles to this early service, but that he had been unable to reach the place till the close. A momentary thought glanced through my mind - here may be a man who never heard the gospel, or it may be he is one that regards it as a feast of fat things; in either case, the effort on his part demands one on mine. So with the hope of doing him good, I resolved at once to forget all else, and, in despite of criticism, and the apprehension of being thought tedious, to give him a quarter of an hour.'

As Fuller and the others present at the breakfast table listened to this simple explanation, they were deeply impressed by Pearce's evident love for souls. Not afraid to appear as one lacking in homiletical skill, especially in the eyes of his fellow pastors, Pearce's zeal for the spiritual health of *all* his hearers had led him to minister as best he could to this 'poor man' who had arrived late.

Given his ardour for the advance of the gospel it is only to be expected that Pearce would be vitally involved in the formation in 1792 of what would eventually be termed the Baptist Missionary Society, the womb of the modern missionary movement. In fact, by 1794 Pearce was so deeply gripped by the cause of missions that he had arrived at the conviction that he should offer his services to the Society and go out to India to join the first missionary team the Society had sent out, namely, William Carey (1761-1834), John Thomas (1757-1801), and their respective families. For an entire month preceding the meeting of the Society's administrative committee at which Pearce's offer would be evaluated, the Birmingham Baptist set apart one day in every week to secret prayer and fasting for direction. He also kept a diary of his experiences during this period, which Fuller later inserted verbatim into his *Memoirs* of Pearce and which admirably displays what Fuller described as his friend's 'singular submissiveness to the will of God'.

During one of these days of prayer, fasting and seeking God's face, Pearce recorded how God met with him in a remarkable way. Pearce had begun the day with 'solemn prayer for the assistance of the Holy Spirit' so that he might 'enjoy the spirit and power of prayer', have his 'personal religion improved, and his public steps directed'. He proceeded to read a portion of Jonathan Edwards' life of the American missionary David Brainerd (1718-1747), a book that quickened the zeal of many of Pearce's generation, and to peruse 2 Corinthians 2-6. Afterwards he went to prayer, but, he recorded,

his heart was hard and ‘all was dullness’, and he feared that somehow he had offended God.

Suddenly, Pearce wrote, ‘it pleased God to smite the rock with the rod of his Spirit, and immediately the waters began to flow.’ Likening the frame of his heart to the rock in the desert that Moses struck with his rod in order to bring forth water from it (see Exodus 17:1-6), Pearce had found himself unable to generate any profound warmth for God and his dear cause. God, as it were, had to come by his Spirit, ‘touch’ Pearce’s heart and so quicken his affections. He was overwhelmed, he wrote, by ‘a heavenly glorious melting power’. He saw afresh the love of a crucified Redeemer and ‘the attractions of his cross’. He felt ‘like Mary [Magdalene] at the master’s feet weeping, for tenderness of soul; like a little child, for submission to my heavenly father’s will’. The need to take the gospel to those who had never heard it gripped him anew ‘with an irresistible drawing of soul’ and, in his own words, ‘compelled me to vow that I would, by his leave, serve him among the heathen’. As he wrote later in his diary:

‘If ever in my life I knew any thing of the influences of the Holy Spirit, I did at this time. I was swallowed up in God. Hunger, fulness, cold, heat, friends and enemies, all seemed nothing before God. I was in a new world. All was delightful; for Christ was all, and in all. Many times I concluded prayer, but when rising from my knees, communion with God was so desirable, that I was sweetly drawn to it again and again, till my . . . strength was almost exhausted.’

The decision of the Society as to Pearce’s status was ultimately a negative one. Rightly or wrongly, when the executive committee of the Society met at Roade, Northamptonshire, on 12 November, it was of the opinion that Pearce could best serve the cause of missions at home in England. Pearce’s response to this decision is best seen in extracts from two letters. The first, written to his wife Sarah the day after he received the decision, stated: ‘I am disappointed, but not dismayed. I ever wish to make my Saviour’s will my own.’ The second, sent to William Carey over four months later, contains a similar desire to submit to the perfectly good and sovereign will of God:

‘Instead of a letter, you perhaps expected to have seen the writer; and had the will of God been so, he would by this time have been on his way to Mudnabatty: but it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. Full of hope and expectation as I was, when I wrote you last, that I should be honoured with a mission to the poor heathen, and be an instrument of establishing the empire of my dear Lord in India, I must submit now to stand still, and see the salvation of God.’

Pearce then told Carey some of the details of the November meeting at which the Society executive had made their decision regarding his going overseas.

‘I shall ever love my dear brethren the more for the tenderness with which they treated me, and the solemn prayer they repeatedly put up to God for me. At last, I withdrew for them to decide, and whilst I was apart from them, and engaged in prayer for divine direction, I felt all anxiety forsake me, and an entire resignation of will to the will of God, be it what it would, together with a satisfaction that so much praying breath would not be lost; but that He who hath promised to be found of all that seek him, would assuredly direct the hearts of my brethren to that which was most pleasing to himself, and most suitable to the interests of his kingdom in the world. Between two and three hours were they deliberating after which time a paper was put into my hands, of which the following is a copy’:

‘The brethren at this meeting are fully satisfied of the fitness of brother P[earce]’s qualifications, and greatly approve of the disinterestedness of his motives and the ardour of his mind. But another Missionary not having been requested, and not being in our view immediately necessary, and brother P[earce] occupying already a post very important to the prosperity of the Mission itself, we are unanimously of opinion that at present, however, he should continue in the situation which he now occupies.’

In response to this decision, which dashed some of Pearce’s deepest longings, he was, he said, ‘enabled cheerfully to reply, “The will of the Lord be done”; and receiving this answer as the voice of God, I have, for the most part, been easy since, though not without occasional pantings of spirit after the publishing of the gospel to the Pagans.’

In the five remaining years of Pearce’s earthly life, he expended much of his energy in raising support for the cause of foreign missions. For instance, Pearce was the preacher at the meeting which saw William Ward (1769-1823) - later to be one of the most invaluable of Carey’s co-workers in India - accepted as a missionary with the Baptist Missionary Society. Those attending the meeting, which took place at Kettering on 16 October 1798, were deeply stirred by Pearce’s passion and concern for the advance of the gospel. He preached ‘like an Apostle’, Fuller later wrote to Carey. And when Ward wrote to Carey, he told his future colleague that Pearce, ‘set the whole meeting in a flame. Had missionaries been needed, we might have had a cargo immediately.’

Returning back to Birmingham from this meeting Pearce was caught in a heavy downpour of rain, drenched to the skin, and subsequently developed a severe chill. Neglecting to rest and foolishly thinking what he called 'pulpit sweats' would effect a cure, he continued a rigorous schedule of preaching at Cannon Street as well as in outlying villages around Birmingham. His lungs became so inflamed that Pearce was necessitated to ask Ward to supply the Cannon Street pulpit for a few months during the winter of 1798-1799.

By mid-December, 1798, Pearce could not converse for more than a few minutes without losing his breath. Yet still he was thinking of the salvation of the lost. Writing to Carey around this time, he told him of a plan to take the gospel to France that he had been mulling over in his mind. At that time England and France were locked in a titanic war that would last into the middle of the second decade of the next century. 'I have been endeavouring for some years', he told Carey, 'to get five of our Ministers to agree that they will apply themselves to the French language . . . then we [for he was obviously intending to be one of the five] might spend two months annually in that Country, and at least satisfy ourselves that Christianity was not lost in France for want of a fair experiment in its favour: and who can tell what God might do!' God would use British evangelicals, notably Pearce's Baptist contemporary Robert Haldane (1764-1842), to take the gospel to Francophiles on the Continent when peace eventually came, but Pearce's anointed preaching would play no part in that great work. Yet his ardent prayers on behalf of the French could not have been without some effect. As Pearce had noted in 1794, 'praying breath' is never lost.

By the spring of 1799 Pearce was desperately ill with pulmonary tuberculosis and dying. Leaving his wife and family - he and Sarah had five children by this time - he went to the south of England from April to July in the hope that rest there might effect a cure. Being away from his wife and children, though, only aggravated his suffering. Writing to Sarah - 'the dear object of my tenderest, my warmest love' - from Plymouth, he requested her to 'write me as soon as you receive this' and signed it, 'ever, ever, ever, wholly yours'. Three weeks later when he wrote, he sent Sarah 'a thousand and 10 thousand thousand embraces' and then poignantly added, 'May the Lord hear our daily prayers for each other!'

Sarah and the children had gone to stay with her family in Alcester, twenty miles or so from Birmingham. But by mid-May Sarah could no longer bear being absent from her beloved. Leaving their children with Birmingham friends, she headed south in mid-May, where she stayed with her husband

Editorial comment on current literature on feminism (see p. 33)

Those who accept the 'traditional' teaching concerning women in the church may well be tempted to pass over the debate provoked by feminism. This would be a grave error. The 'evangelical feminist' position is not only reflected in those churches which ordain women to the ministry, but also, insidiously, in the increasing acceptance among many Christians of the idea of marriage as a 'totally equal' (ie, undifferentiated) partnership. This is of course only a reflection of what is going on in society around us, but it has implications for all in our churches.

When the Biblical texts regarding headship and submission are seen as utterly unpalatable, then evangelicals (unlike liberals) cannot simply dismiss them. Instead they have to resort to all manner of elaborate 'get outs' to explain them away. But when the 'plain sense' of Scripture is no longer allowed, confidence in the Word of God is severely dented. For that reason it is vital that we are aware of the best of the literature available to counter the increasing popularity of 'evangelical feminist' teaching. In the new book responding to 'evangelical feminism' published by Day One publications (for details see p. 34), Stephen Rees contributes an excellent chapter entitled 'How feminism effects your theology'. In it he demonstrates that 'when worked out consistently, it subverts the biblical doctrine of the Trinity; it undermines the twin pillars of evangelical doctrine – our fall in Adam and our redemption in Christ; and that in the end, it destroys the whole fabric of the Bible story' (pp. 153-4). We ignore this debate at our peril.

until the couple slowly made their way home to Birmingham in mid-July. By his time Samuel's voice was so far gone that he could not even whisper without pain in his lungs. His suffering, though, seemed to act like a refiner's fire to draw him closer to Christ. 'Blessed be his dear name,' he said not long before his death, 'who shed his blood for me . . . Now I see the value of the religion of the cross. It is a religion for a dying sinner . . . Yes, I taste its sweetness, and enjoy its fulness, with all the gloom of a dying-bed before me; and far rather would I be the poor emaciated and emaciating creature that I am, than be an emperor with every earthly good about him, but without a God.'

He fell asleep in Christ on Thursday 10 October 1799. William Ward, who had been profoundly influenced by Pearce's zeal and spirituality, well summed up his character when he wrote not long before the latter's death: 'Oh, how does personal religion shine in Pearce! What a soul! What ardour for the glory of God! . . . you see in him a mind wholly given up to God; a sacred lustre shines in his conversation: always tranquil, always cheerful . . . I have seen more of God in him than in any other person I ever met.'

Note: Extensive references to source materials have been omitted. These are obtainable on request.

Observations on Supernatural Gifts

Tom Wells

Early in my Christian life I experienced the blessing of being exposed to Christians of differing persuasions. I found myself with believers who held that miraculous gifts still continue in the Church. They alerted me to look for such gifts, especially those connected with physical healing. This is a brief account of what I have found.



*Tom Wells – pastor of The King's Chapel,
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In the mid-1950s Oral Roberts came to Cincinnati, to conduct an evangelistic and healing campaign. Through the kindness of Pentecostal friends I was given the opportunity to be a counsellor in this campaign. My first interest was to see whether the counselling of prospective converts was satisfactory, but as a participant I was given an excellent seat where I could watch closely those who came for healing. As successive men and women walked up and down the ramp to be prayed for, I saw nothing unusual, though others around me were moved to shout for joy at what they saw. It was clear that my lack of faith or their willingness to believe was blinding myself or them to what was actually happening. All of us, of course, sat there convinced that our own assessment was correct. What else could we do?

Years later I came across a little booklet that professed to tell of the tricks used by 'healers' to convince their audiences. The author said that no healer would deliberately deal with two stone deaf ears or two fully blind eyes. But how do you keep such people out of the healing lines? The answer: simply divide those wanting to be prayed for into two groups by giving them cards - *apparently at random* - inscribed either with an 'A' or 'B'. Then announce that due to the large number wanting to be prayed for, only one group would be called at the present meeting. The point, of course, was to weed out the undesirables by giving them a card with the letter which would not be called that evening.

All this took me back in memory to the Roberts' campaign. The cards had been

passed out then, just as the booklet described; I remember it well. But something else came to mind. The device had failed. Down the ramp came a blind man. Roberts questioned him and found that he was a pastor from Indiana who was completely blind in both eyes. What happened next? Roberts said, "All I feel led to do for you tonight, brother, is to pray for your ministry." He did so, and the man continued down the ramp as blind as when he came.

I had another pertinent experience in 1955. I was travelling with a friend, Bill Yoder (later to have a drug ministry called 'Yeldall Manor' in Reading, England), to help him raise missionary support. As we drove out of South Bend, Indiana, we saw a huge gospel tent advertising a healing crusade. The evangelist, whose name has now slipped from memory, was one of the best known healers of the day. The thing that caught my eye, however, was an announcement that Nolan Golden would be singing in that meeting. Nolan was an acquaintance of mine, so I suggested that, since the meeting was over, we find him and go out together to a meal. We did so and he brought along the healer's song-leader, a young man who had been with the evangelist for two or three months. During that time he would have seen more than a thousand people prayed for, to be healed. Imagine my surprise, then, when it became apparent that this young man was not sure he had ever seen anyone healed! Did he suffer from lack of faith, sitting there on the platform night after night? You may judge for yourself, but I could not bring myself to believe that was the whole explanation. His experience was too much like my own.

Moving forward a number of years, we come to a time when Derek Prince came to Cincinnati. Again I was able to get a seat near the front to watch all that happened. During the first part of the service, for one hour and twenty minutes, Prince gave us a survey of Romans 1 - 8. Though I could not agree with all he said on Romans 8, on the whole he did a masterly job and kept the respectful attention of all of us. He had a reputation as a good exegete and he lived up to it that night.

When he closed his message, Prince announced that he would now pray for the sick. He added that the Lord had given him a special ability in praying for people with two types of handicap, those with curvature of the spine and those who had one limb longer than the other. Either of these, I thought (in what proved to be my naïveté!), would offer a conclusive test of Prince's power in prayer. What I had not reckoned on was the large number of people who had one leg a few millimetres longer than the other. Most of them were women and it seemed that they all wanted to be prayed for. I mention that they were women because Prince said something that I would not have believed if I had not heard it with my own ears. He claimed that if any woman felt that she was

already too tall, he could shorten one leg instead of lengthening the other! Having made this astounding announcement, he formed two healing lines at two ends of the platform and set to work, alternately moving across the front of the auditorium and praying for one person from each line.

I will never forget that night for three reasons. First, and least significant, I had a hard-of-hearing friend who claimed to be healed that night. With motives less than pure, no doubt, I had a mutual acquaintance test this 'healing' by walking up behind her at the church they attended and speaking in a normal voice. The result? Our mutual friend reported, "She's just as hard of hearing as ever!"

Second, and more important, was the way Prince conducted himself in dealing with the large number of women who came to have legs lengthened. He simply grasped both their ankles as they sat on a chair and massaged them while he asked if they could feel their legs lengthening. It was not an edifying scene. More than that there was no way for the audience to make a judgment about these supposed lengthenings. When he first announced this I had imagined a leg six inches or so longer than its mate. That would have been a test; this meant nothing.

But the third thing that happened that night proved beyond doubt the value of these 'gifts'. While Prince was busy with the line that formed at the right of the platform, and consequently had his back turned to the line at the left, someone brought an elderly lady in a wheelchair to the front of the left line. She was terribly twisted by curvature of the spine, one of the 'specialities' that the healer claimed to have. Here was a fair test of his healing gifts or the power of his prayers with the Lord.

Shortly Prince turned and approached the left-hand line. Unbelievably, when he saw the woman, he broke into an angry roar, "Get that woman out of here!" he shouted, "I've got to take people in the order the Lord leads me!" The cruelty of that moment bears unimpeachable testimony to the emptiness of his claim. The gift of dealing with curvature of the spine was not there when needed. Was he, then, a conscious deceiver? Perhaps not. Perhaps he deceived himself by dealing with spines that were no more askew than the few millimetres we met with when measuring legs. But deceiver or deceived, the result was the same. The vaunted gift did not exist; the claim was empty.

Let's expand the question of deception to take in Oral Roberts as well as the others I have mentioned. Are these men sincere? Do they believe they have the gift of healing? I think they probably are sincere. Others, of course, may differ,

but in a real sense the question is irrelevant. The pertinent question is: do these gifts exist? What is being done?

When Ronald Reagan was President I saw a discussion programme on TV about his policies as they bore on black Americans. Someone offered the opinion that the President loved black people. A black participant shot back, "We are not primarily interested in whether or not he loves us! What are his policies? Are they good for black Americans?" That was the question, wasn't it? When a man enters the public arena where he will influence tens of thousands we need to know, not whether he likes his constituency, but, is what he is doing good for them?

In the same way, we are not primarily interested in the sincerity of these men. There is a greater question; do they deceive their followers? The awful reality is: jointly they may deceive tens of thousands.

For these reasons I am unmoved by the various startling headlines of today. Is John Wimber of the Vineyard a sincere man? I suppose he is. Further than that, I congratulate him and his movement for distancing themselves from the notion that it is always God's will to heal. They will tell you that the sovereignty of God must be reckoned with, and so it must!

Is Jack Deere, a strong theological advocate of the Vineyard, a sincere man? My guess (in the nature of the case, that's all it can be) is, yes, he is. But when Jack Deere tells us, as he did on a tape to which I listened, that what we are seeing now is not to be compared with the heyday of healing evangelists in America, the time of which I earlier spoke, I know what to think. How does he know that? He says that Paul Cain, who was there, told him so.

But I too was there. No, I did not know Oral Roberts and Jack Coe and the others personally as Cain apparently did. But still, *I was there*. I had my eyes and ears open. I'm convinced that there was a great deal of sound (as there is today) and a great deal of fury, but little else. According to Deere and Cain, there is even less today! Let us believe them. And let us get on with the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Equal and Different

A review of 'Equal and Different: Male and female in church and family', by Michael Harper, Hodder & Stoughton, 1994, £8.99, pp242.

by Norman Wells

The natural order

The tone of the book is set in the opening chapter by a series of propositions regarding God's design for men and women in marriage and family:

1. God has made men and women equally in his image.
2. God has given men the responsibility of headship and women that of helper.
3. God's will is that marriage should be heterosexual.
4. Marriage is a life-long partnership between a man and a woman.
5. The father is the head of the family.
6. Children are to be desired, loved and cherished.
7. Parents, especially mothers, should give priority to their children in the early years.
8. Children are to be disciplined and taught obedience, especially by fathers.

In a society which is increasingly turning what is natural on its head, principles which were once almost universally accepted can no longer be taken for granted. Role distinctions between men and women are now largely denied, homosexuals are making great strides in their campaign for 'equal rights', parents are tending to put career and leisure before their children, and the whole concept of filial obedience is vanishing amid vocal cries for 'children's rights'. According to Michael Harper, 'a society that begins to treat as "normal" or "natural" what is the opposite is in grave danger', and he expresses concern that the influence of feminist thought is having disastrous consequences both in the nation as a whole and in the Church.

The dangers of feminism

In her foreword, Dr Joanne May writes that feminism is doomed to failure because it rests on 'the erroneous belief that personal power, through the mechanism of a score-keeping egalitarianism, is the road to happiness'. Michael Harper observes that if feminism has helped the *position* of women in Western society, it has certainly not contributed to their *happiness*. He argues that modern women are

exhausted by a multiplicity of roles and cites Kathy Gyngell, herself a former feminist, on the damage done by feminists:

1. They have undermined and denigrated the option of motherhood as a career.
2. They have viewed children as commodities without unique individualised emotional needs.
3. They have perpetuated the myth that 'other' care is as good as 'mother care'.
4. They have not challenged the Establishment view that mothers are economically inactive (p178).

It is particularly alarming to learn that, by ratifying the UN Convention of the Eliminating of Discrimination Against Women, the United Kingdom is, in effect, committed to a feminist manifesto which sets out 'to eliminate practices based on stereotyped roles of men and women' and requires signatories to 'provide child-care facilities to enable parents to combine family obligations with work responsibilities and participation in public life' (p180).

Feminism in the Church

For Michael Harper the decision, in many parts of the professing Christian church, to ordain women to the ministry reflects the influence of feminism within the church. He claims that 'Christian feminism' may use different language but its arguments and egalitarian goals are the same as those of radical feminism. 'It may not condemn the family as such, but by making its goal equality it undermines the basic God-given hierarchical framework, and the defined roles of men and women as specified in the Scriptures' (p131).

He also considers that several major Christian truths are at stake, including the relationship between the Persons of the Trinity, the nature of the image of God in mankind, the incarnation of Christ and the authority of the Scriptures. For example he writes, 'Within the Trinity we may see both unity and diversity, or we might say, equality, yet diversity of roles or order, and submissiveness of functions. That is exactly what we are saying about men and women . . . [Their] roles are no more interchangeable than the roles of the Father and the Son. The greatest danger in ordaining women is that it reverses the roles of men and women in defiance of God the Creator . . . It reflects a rejection of the principle of submission which is part of the Trinity's relationship within itself . . . When men and women claim to have found an equality of relationship *without* hierarchy and without biblically defined roles of headship and submission they are claiming something which is not true of God' (pp155,158).

The biblical basis

A criticism frequently levelled at those who maintain that God has created a distinction between male and female and oppose the ordination of women is that they are 'mere traditionalists'. Michael Harper is not too embarrassed by the label because, as he points out, the word tradition has a noble meaning (see 2 Thess 2:15; 3:6) and it would be sheer arrogance to dismiss two thousand years of Church history out of hand. Nevertheless, he does not rest his case on Church tradition, but on a careful examination of Scripture.

The Bible clearly teaches in Genesis 1:26-27 that men and women were created equally in the image of God. At the same time, Genesis 2 demonstrates that they were not created at the same time, in the same way, nor for the same purpose. Harper suggests that the mode of creation points to different roles. The man, taken from the earth, is to subdue it; whereas the woman was taken from man's side and is to be primarily concerned with people, not things, supremely as mother. In their relationship to each other, man has the responsibility to serve as head. The naming of the animals and of Eve by Adam was an expression of his God-given authority.

In response to the argument that the fundamental differentiation between male and female roles set forth in Genesis 2 has been affected by the fall, Michael Harper cites John Piper and Wayne Grudem in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* and contends that, 'Paul *never* appeals to the curse or the fall as an explanation for man's responsibility to lead; he always appeals to the acts of God before the fall' (1 Cor 11:8-9; Eph 5:31-32; 1 Tim 2:13). Neither was the apostle culturally conditioned when he wrote about male headship in 1 Corinthians 11; 14:33-38 and 1 Timothy 2:11-14. Rather he invokes the law (1 Cor 14:34), God's creative acts (1 Tim 2:13) and the command of the Lord Jesus Christ himself (1 Cor 14:37)' (p58). The unity enjoyed by male and female in Christ (Gal 3:28) does not abolish gender differences. Jesus Christ came to show 'the way of co-operation, not competition, the way of peace, not war, between the sexes. He did not come to change the created order, which includes the headship of men and the submission of women; but rather to transform it by his love and grace, so that what God created can be redeemed and function properly' (p38).

The example of the early church

The idea that the ordination of women is a relatively new issue which has arisen only in this century as Western women have had increased educational opportunities, is dismissed as a myth. Michael Harper notes that in first-century Ephesus women were very prominent in the professions as teachers and leaders. Equal rights for women were part of the cult of Isis. Yet against this feminist background,

Paul urged Timothy not to let the women teach in the church (1 Tim 2:11-14). Controversy surrounded the subject as early as the second century and groups as diverse as the Marcionites, Gnostics and Montanists ordained women, yet the movement was strongly resisted by the Church Fathers as being contrary to both the teaching of Scripture and the example of Christ. At the same time, women were encouraged to study and to be active in the life of the church, and they were certainly not oppressed or considered inferior.

Absent fathers . . . deflected mothers

The chapters on Equality and Order in the Family are excellent. They draw on a comprehensive range of up to date literature documenting the appalling effects of the 'fall-out' from the family breakdown for which modern feminism must take part of the blame.

Firm convictions

Mr Harper confesses that it is only during the past six years that he has moved from a position of indifference on the respective roles of male and female in the family and church to one of passionate concern. He has now written a brave book which could well lose him a number of friends in his own charismatic circles. Indeed, he laments the short-sightedness, pragmatism and 'theological indifferentism,' to which the experience-orientated movements are often prone: 'Whether a thing works or not becomes more important than whether it is biblically and theologically correct. If things work, Charismatics don't want to raise awkward issues about whether it squares with the Bible . . .' (p56).

Evangelicals will have difficulty with some of the author's comments in the chapter on 'Symbols' and will not be able to follow him in his concerns about the implications of the ordination of women in the Church of England for ecumenical relations with Rome and the Eastern Orthodox churches. They will reject his negative view of Reformational teaching respecting women (p114), they will demur at his caricature of 'Western' Trinitarian theology (p157) and regret his acceptance of the failure of the Eastern Church to recognise the procession of the Spirit from the Son (p156).

Harper's main arguments, however, are thorough and compelling, and the warnings given are worthy of serious thought and consideration. We dare not allow ourselves to be conformed to the world's way of thinking on the place of men and women in the home and the church. Rather, we need to have our thinking renewed through a careful study of the Scriptures and their application to contemporary society. In this respect, *Equal and Different* will help to show us the way.

Current Literature on Feminism

Sharon James

In this issue a full review article on Michael Harper's recent book *Equal And Different* is published. While there is much literature on the subject of the roles of women in the church and family, and much that is excellent, most recent contributions have come from North America. We would suggest that Harper provides one of the most convincing and up to date works defending 'traditional' gender roles from a British perspective.

Prior to his conversion to the Antiochian Orthodox Church, Michael Harper was an Anglican minister who had become something of an elder statesman in the charismatic movement. Following a curacy at All Souls, Langham Place, in central London during the 1960s, he has devoted much of his ministry to promoting the charismatic renewal in the historic denominations including the Roman Catholic Church. For this reason this work on male and female roles in the church and family is likely to be overlooked by those of us who are reformed, non-charismatic and non-ecumenical. That would be a pity because while the author's ecumenical sympathies do surface here and there, they do not detract from his central plea for a return to a pattern for male and female roles which is in agreement with nature, Scripture and reason.

The reviewer's commendation does not imply an endorsement of Harper's position on the charismatic or ecumenical movements!

We take the opportunity to note other recent contributions on the vital subject of feminism:

Different by Design: Discovering God's Will for Today's Man and Woman. John MacArthur, Jr, Victor Books, 1994. 214pp.

This book is written at a popular rather than an academic level. It is readable, relevant, and interspersed with plenty of up to date illustrations (from a North American perspective). MacArthur explains the real threat posed by the feminist movement and argues from Scripture for differentiated roles for men and women in the family and the church. With an increasing number of evangelical churches being influenced by the 'egalitarian' position, it is vital to address this issue. A study guide is provided for personal or group use. We are currently working through this book in our men's and ladies' meetings, adapting the study guide for a more British perspective.

The Feminist Gospel: The Movement to Unite Feminism with the Church. Mary A Kassian, Crossway Books, 1992. 287pp.

Kassian provides a comprehensive analysis of secular and religious feminist thought over the past thirty years. She argues strongly that feminism is absolutely incompatible with biblical Christianity. She deals with the 'Evangelical Feminist position', a position taken, for example, by Mary



The Leicester Conference – time for lunch – see report page 40

Stewart Van Leeuwen (*Gender and Grace*, IVP, 1990). Kassian is passionately and rightly concerned that the church is being infiltrated by a 'different gospel' and the research she has done is a powerful demonstration of the importance of this issue. If we remain uninformed and silent, the argument by default is going to go to those who, however well meaning, are committed to a position which is destructive and dangerous.

Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism, eds. John Piper and Wayne Grudem. Sponsored by the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, Crossway Books, 1991. 566 pp.

At the present time this is probably the most detailed and comprehensive treatment of the 'Biblical Complementarity' of men and women in the family and church. It was written as a response to the formation and declared aim of 'Christians for Biblical Equality'. This is a broadly evangelical

grouping calling for complete equality between men and women, arguing that differentiation of role must involve sinful inequality. Marriage must be an equal partnership, women must be allowed to engage in every ministry in the church. By contrast 'The Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood', while admitting that the 'traditional' position has all too often been sinfully abused, argues that it is possible to have differentiation of role without diminishing equality of dignity or status. There is careful exegesis of the pertinent Scripture passages, and discussion of practical out-working of the issues.

Just published: *Men, Women and Authority: Serving together in the church: This symposium is a response to evangelical feminism*. Contributors: Edward Donnelly, Mark Johnston, Brian Edwards, Sharon James, Jonathan & Sheila Stevens, Kenneth Brownell, Stephen Rees and John Benton. Day One Publications, 6 Sherman Road, Bromley, Kent BR1 3JH, UK. £7.99. 259pp.

West Ham, East London

A report by Pastor Bill Charlton, formerly a missionary in Ethiopia, who has pastored the church for 8 years.

The West Ham Tabernacle (Newham borough) was founded in 1840 and the present building opened in 1903. The congregation was at a peak numerically between the two wars. Subsequently, as with many city environs, there has been a population movement outwards. The area has become run down and Newham is well known as providing accommodation, often temporary, for third world citizens seeking entrance into Britain.

The church is very cosmopolitan with a congregation representing Asia, Africa and the Caribbean. We consider ourselves to be in a missionary situation. We have seen the Lord working among those from this shifting population. We give thanks that some have been converted and some backsliders restored, though most have either later returned to their own countries or moved to other areas of Britain.

Five years ago there were eleven members including my wife, myself, our two daughters and two elderly ladies. We were very concerned for the future of the church witness in the area. We felt particularly concerned for children who had passed through the Sunday School but began to drift away. We ran a regular Friday night activity, 'Discoverers', for young children. This was very popular and also attracted Muslim, Hindu and



The West Ham Tabernacle

Sikh children. We realised that something needed to be done to keep the children who were reaching the upper age limit for 'Discoverers'. About this time the Lord blessed us and our midweek prayer meeting, though small, became alive. Prayer was made without ceasing and would continue after the scheduled closing time.

Two new developments came out of this, a 'Girls' Club' for senior school girls, with my wife teaching sewing and cooking in the manse followed by Bible study. We also started a 'Young People's'

group for over eleven years after the Sunday evening service. We encouraged a knowledge of the Scriptures and tried to help the youngsters adapt to life in East London, finally escorting them home after the close at 9 pm, a very long day of service!

These activities have continued and our church prayer meeting has continued to be alive with more and more prayer ascending to the throne of grace. We have stressed the fact that the Word of the Lord endures forever and that it will not return void. We were encouraged when two ladies in the church became Sunday School teachers. Then in May 1994 one of the senior Bible class came to me very concerned and burdened. The Lord had been working in her heart. Soon another came, and then another. By the end of June, eight were earnestly seeking the Lord. Two had shown a remarkable change in their lives even before they came to see me. One lad had been so changed that his mother, who rarely came near our church, actually came to the meetings to see what was going on as she was so impressed with the difference in her son's life.

Eventually seven were baptised. Six of these are now junior members of the church (the seventh was prevented from coming into membership by his mother). These young folk are continuing with the Lord, the Bible Class is well attended and one of the six is helping with the Sunday School. We have had further encouragements but do need workers in this inner city church. At the moment I am the only man who is able to do what needs to be done. There are no deacons so, apart from my pastoral duties, I am secretary, janitor, handyman and chauffeur for the aged and

the young who need transport to and from services.

We acknowledge that the Lord has blessed us only out of his goodness and mercy and give him all the praise and glory.

Lewisham, South East London

Christopher Hand BA, MPhil, has been appointed associate pastor of College Park Baptist Chapel from April 1st and will be sole pastor from August 1st 1996.

The present pastor, Joseph Hewitt, and his wife Elizabeth will be involved in travelling from 1 August to 8 December. They will visit Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines, Australia (including Tasmania in visiting pastor David Jones formerly of Grove Chapel Camberwell, London), New Zealand and Fiji. Pastor Hewitt's first pastorate was at London Road Baptist Church, Chelmsford (1954-1960), the second at Providence Baptist Church, Highbury, North London (1960-1978) followed by the position of Warden of the Foreign Missions Club at Highbury (1978-1989). From 1989 he has been pastor at College Park Baptist Chapel.

Walthamstow, N E London

Nick Needham, who contributed valuable material on the subject of the Toronto Blessing in *RT148*, has accepted a call to be assistant pastor at Central Baptist Church, Walthamstow where James Wood is currently pastor. This is a Reformed Baptist church with about fifty members and is situated in a predomi-

nantly Muslim area. The strength of the Islamic community is seen in several mosques and three Islamic bookshops. Is there anywhere in Britain where there are three Christian bookshops in the same street? What is sad is the low standard in many Christian bookshops, the priority in too many cases being to pander to what sells rather than to promote biblical material.

Bradford on Avon

The Reformed Baptist Church in Avon has a long history which has its genesis in the same year the *1689 Baptist Confession* was published. The work came to its lowest ebb in 1937 when only one member remained. In recent years the church has grown and now has 70 members. The work has been built up through the combined ministry of John Alsop and Robert Oliver. John Alsop retired recently. Paul Oliver, son of Robert and Rachel Oliver, now shares the pastoral oversight and preaching with his father. Robert specialises in Church history and teaches in the London Theological Seminary. He also serves on the committee of the annual Westminster Conference in London.

The 25th anniversary of Robert Oliver's ministry at Bradford on Avon was celebrated during March. The visiting speaker was the editor of *Reformation Today* who took the opportunity to convey publicly the sentiments expressed in the editorial concerning the importance of preserving and developing our legacies. Robert Oliver has written the foreword to Michael Haykin's book *Knollys, Kiffin and Keach*.



Robert Oliver (on the left) and Paul Oliver

Korea

A report by Jeff Kendal, English Pastor, working alongside the Korean Pastor Bahn, of the Baptist Church in Bang-Bae, Seoul.

The unique character of Korean Christianity has a lot to teach us in the West. Certain features highlight the ongoing blessing of God:

1. A strong emphasis on prayer

The Korean church is well known for local church-based daily early morning corporate prayer meetings as well as whole nights of prayer, often accompanied by fasting. They view prayer as the vehicle which releases the power of God upon his church. Historically committed and sacrificial prayer has been the experience of the Korean church since the great revival of 1907 and has strengthened God's people through ensuing periods of unspeakable persecution.

2. A strong missionary interest

Korean Christians believe church growth is to proceed by missions supported by local churches. They are aware of their indebtedness to early American missionaries who from 1882 evangelised, educated and tended the sick and needy, planting churches which would be indigenously controlled and self-supporting. Now Korea itself is reported to have about 3,500 missionaries in 125 countries, a remarkable growth since there were about 2,600 in 1993. However church attendance at home has levelled out.

3. Eating together, an act of fellowship

Culturally eating together is important. To enter a Korean home and not be offered food is considered a great insult. The importance of eating together is carried over to the church but is indeed biblical (Rev 3:20, Luke 14:15). The fellowship and social intimacy produced by eating together enhances church life and provides a unique opportunity for personal ministry and evangelism. Even the huge Choong Hyon Presbyterian Church in Kangnam, Seoul, with its 15,000 members, provides a free lunch each Sunday for all who attend.

4. Small home group services

These home meetings are formally structured with hymns, Bible reading and sermon or Bible study. They give the opportunity of a warmer, more personal fellowship not possible in the large Sunday meetings. They are subject to pastoral oversight and are often purposely evangelistic.



Jeff Kendal

General remarks

The Presbyterian denomination is enormous by comparison with the Baptists. Generally, Presbyterians look on Baptists as untheological and muddled thinkers. I have not been able to locate any Reformed Baptist groups. Historically American Baptist missionaries early this century, though well educated themselves, did not pass this on by educating new local pastors. The emphasis was on 'the simple gospel'. As Baptists we need to heed the past. There can be no place for obscurantism which scorns definitive doctrine and deems the 'simple gospel' as all that is necessary.

The Presbyterians on the other hand established both seminaries and universities; they not only evangelised, but emphasised education. They saw the need for centres of advanced theological study and are now reaping the benefits.

We can learn much from the consistent practice of fervent sacrificial prayer among Korean Christians; but also note their teachability, love of fellowship, global vision and desire to spread the gospel world-wide.

Italy

Andrea Artioli became burdened with concern for the lack of reliable expository materials in Italian. With very little support he launched a publishing venture, *Passagio* (CP 64, Mantova 46100, Italy). The first book to be translated and published was *Romans (chapter one)* by Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones. In one year more than 2,500 copies were distributed in Italy. The next volume was published in 1995. Two further books are now ready for the printer: *2 Peter* by Dr Lloyd-Jones and *Discovering God's Will* by Sinclair Ferguson. It is noteworthy that Dr Lloyd-Jones' expositions head the best sellers list in the Portuguese language in Brazil. *Passagio's* encouraging success so far may lead to a similar situation in Italy!

Dominican Republic

The Dominican Republic forms the eastern two thirds of the island of Hispaniola, shared with Haiti. After Cuba (10.8 million), the Dominican Republic has the second largest population in the Caribbean (7.9 million). Roman Catholicism (91.2%) is the official religion. Some estimate that half the population is involved in occult practices. Protestant churches have been growing steadily since the 1970s.



Pastor Greg Elmquist

Greg Elmquist, pastor of the Reformed Baptist Church, Orlando, Florida, recently returned from ministry in a church in Santo Domingo which has 500 members and 1,400 in attendance. The building is too small for the large congregation and half have to sit outside and watch a TV screen. Pastor Elmquist reports that services are devoted almost exclusively to expository preaching which is sustained because there is the commensurate hunger for the Word of God. There is commitment in the leadership to teach every church member the content of the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith and this has paid high dividends in an exceptional spirit of unity and maturity.

Prayer is requested that the elders of this church will have the needed discernment as they interview many new converts. Plans are under way for the construction of an auditorium to seat 2,500.

The Leicester Conference

Editor

A record number of about twenty nations was represented at the 1996 Banner of Truth conference for ministers at Leicester. Martin Holdt of South Africa was the visiting preacher. He was enabled to bring the power of Scripture and its divine authority to bear on the theme of 'The absolute necessity of biblical love and the necessity of Christian forgiveness'. Had there been any lurking unforgiveness before, it is doubtful that there would have been any after the conference!

As Alun McNabb was unable to participate because of illness, Paul Cook of Hull stepped in to take the opening session. His subject was 'David at Ziklag'. He suggested that Ziklag was the lowest point of David's life (1 Sam 30:6). Yet he encouraged himself in the Lord. John Marshall skilfully and courageously tackled the subject of church discipline. He showed how great is the prejudice against it and reluctance to maintain it. Even when discipline is applied, the erring often simply move on to where they are welcomed without any investigation as to their standing or previous track record.

Geoff Thomas was in his very best versatile form in presenting the life of Alfred Rehwinkel (1887-1974), the Lutheran leader in the large denomination in America known as The Missouri Synod. In the matter of downgrade in seminaries we are accustomed to reports that leaders are unwilling to contend for the truth. The outcome is inevitable: the downfall of evangelical seminaries which were once bastions of the Bible. It was truly thrilling to hear of Rehwinkel, a leader who fought the good fight of faith and actually won! - only just, and against great odds.

John R de Witt's chairmanship of a panel on the subject of preaching was outstanding. On the panel were Derek Thomas, Stuart Olyott and Edward Donnelly. It is a pity that this was not recorded on video. At an evening session, Dr de Witt presented the life and ministry of Alexander Whyte. Not everyone was convinced about Whyte's being quite as doctrinally perfect as he was depicted. Not being familiar with that era I am not in a position to cast a vote on the matter! One of the advantages of these conferences is that we continue to be taught. It will take eternity to know the whole story of Church history. John Duncan, nicknamed Rabbi Duncan, with a particular emphasis on the minister's self-knowledge, was well portrayed in a paper by John M Brentnall. It is splendid to concentrate on biographies in the evenings. The conference concluded with a refreshing exposition on Psalm 122 by Edward Donnelly.

The cassettes of all the above sessions are commended. For details write to Rev I M Densham, 15 Ayr Terrace, St Ives, Cornwall TR26 1ED.

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