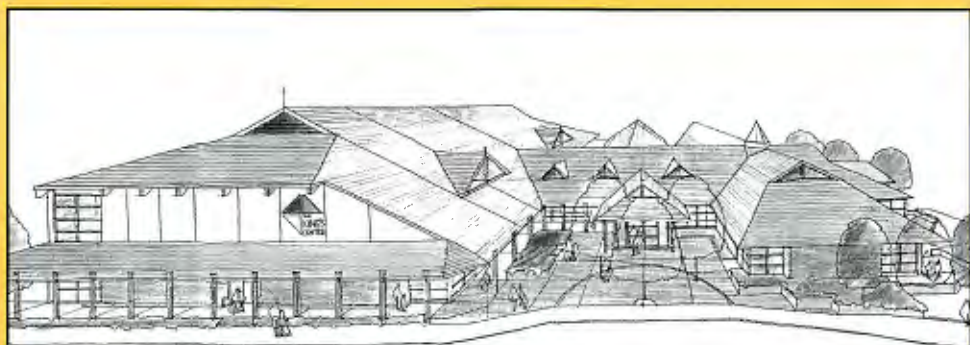


REFORMATION TODAY



The King's Centre,

*'a home for the community
at the heart of the church'.*

MARCH/APRIL 1997

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RT on World Wide Web

The World Wide Web (WWW) links computers worldwide, and provides a means of sharing information across the globe.

Reformation Today now has its own WWW site, thanks to the labours of Brian Kidd and Dean Olive of Madison, Alabama, USA. The site is updated with current articles by Paul Credgington of Leeds, UK, and linked to other locations of interest. It may be found at:

<http://www.hsv.tis.net/~gracebap/rthome.htm>

Phil Johnson, who operates the Spurgeon site on the WWW has established something of a guide to Christianity on the web with his 'Bookmarks' at:

<http://www.gty.org/~phil/bookmark.htm>

His comment on Reformation Today is, 'My favourite Baptist monthly – edited by Erroll Hulse, and published in England. I'm a long-time subscriber, and I look forward to every issue. They have an uncanny knack for anticipating the very subjects I want to study.'

You may be interested to learn that Michael Keen has compiled a complete index of Westminster Conference papers, Reformation Today and The Banner of Truth magazines. This enhances the value of back issues of these journals. The index is available on the WWW at:

<http://www.aber.ac.uk/~emk/>

The index is also on disk: details are available on request from The Christian Bookshop, Alfred Place, Aberystwyth SY23 2BS, UK or Email:

emk@aber.ac.uk

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Front cover: *The King's Centre, Mansfield Park, Chessington, Surrey is due to open as the new venue for **Chessington Evangelical Church** in May '97 . . . 'a home for the community at the heart of the church.' Over the last 45 years the ministries have grown and the congregation now numbers about 400. They believe that the new Church Centre with community and recreational facilities will bring hundreds of people each week into everyday contact with Christians and provide a bridge for the gospel (see 'bridge building' p. 8). Trevor Pearce serves as a full time evangelist. Pastors Trevor Archer and John Tindall maintain a biblical, expository preaching ministry. RT will bring a further report later in the year.*

Editorial

A recent random survey of 200 Anglican clergy revealed that only 68 of them were able to recite the Ten Commandments. Sadly this brings to mind the dismay of godly Bishop John Hooper of Gloucester, who found in 1551 that 168 out of the 311 clergy in his diocese were unable to recite the commandments. Despite all advances in education and literacy it seems that as far as spiritual basics are concerned we are retreating to the Dark Ages.

The ignorance of those 132 contemporary clergy reflects the low view of Scripture rampant among so much of the professing Church. The same survey found that many denied the doctrine of eternal punishment: a truth increasingly rejected or ignored by professing Evangelicals. In a scintillating lecture for Dr Williams's library, Michael Watts argued that the English people stopped going to church once the doctrines of sin, salvation, and eternal damnation had been jettisoned by the main denominations. The key points of that important lecture are outlined in the article 'Why did they Stop?' The implication is that a revival of religion cannot be anticipated unless there is a clear warning of what we are to be saved from.

Michael Watts has also produced the definitive history of Nonconformity, and Sharon James gives an overview of his volume on *The Expansion of Evangelical Nonconformity 1791-1859*. This massive 911 page work fills out the thesis advanced in his London lecture. The review notes his telling

comparison between the worldview of the theological liberals (the Quakers and Unitarians) and the theologically orthodox (the Baptists and Methodists). The hearts and minds of the former were concentrated on this world, concerned above all to secure a comfortable life for their families. The hearts of the Evangelicals were fixed on heaven; they cared above all else about salvation, and viewed their fellow men as those whose souls needed saving. What a challenge! If we, though theologically orthodox, have slipped into making worldly concerns or family comfort our priority, then we cannot expect our message to convey the power and conviction that it did during that time of tremendous church growth.

The liberalism of today does not only deny the existence of eternal punishment, it also rewrites the ethical demands of Scripture. This was epitomised by the service in Southwark Cathedral for the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement. We asked David Streater, secretary of the Church Society and a well-known contender for the Reformed Faith, for his comment on this. 'Murder in the Cathedral' is an apt title for his excellent overview of how the homosexual lobby is ceaselessly at work to promote its own agenda.

Ultimately the only answer to our spiritual plight is a movement of the Holy Spirit, but God uses means, and above all the faithful preaching of the gospel. This is addressed by Bob Sheehan in his article 'The Preacher and his Call to Preach'.

Why did they Stop?

Editor

Why Did the English Stop Going to Church? That is the title of an important lecture by notable historian Michael Watts at Dr Williams's Library in London on 19th October 1995.¹ This lecture is significant for the reasons which will appear from the following headings.

The myth of English church attendance

Have you sometimes thought that the Puritans must have enjoyed an easy time because in those days almost everyone attended church? Have you imagined that evangelism for them was hardly necessary? After all most of the population sat before them on a Sunday morning. Have you thought that all the Puritan pastors had to do was to prepare and deliver their sermons?

Richard Baxter (1615-1691), a third generation Puritan, should remind us that such an idyllic idea of church going is mistaken. Baxter spent 14 years at Kidderminster. When he began his ministry there the spiritual situation was barren. Very few attended church. After fourteen years of intense visitation, characterised by catechetical instruction, the church had been extended to five additional galleries to accommodate most of the inhabitants of the town. It was the breath of the Spirit, hard work and faithful gospel preaching that filled the church.

There is no evidence in the history of England that her people naturally flocked to church. There never was a golden age when everyone attended church out of free will. We are indebted to the outstanding historian Michael Watts for his thorough research which demonstrates that efforts to compel the English into church did not work. Such a thought is doubtful anyway. The English by nature do not respond well to coercion.

Watts traces the story of the English Church. In medieval times few demands were placed on the populace to attend church. The Council of Sardica around 343 did attempt to prescribe that any Christian living in a city who failed to

attend worship on three consecutive Sundays should do penance, but there is no evidence that the rule was ever enforced. The fourth Lateran Council of 1215 tried to implement what has been called Pope Innocent III's 'pastoral revolution'. It laid down that every adult member of the Church should go to confession and communion at least once a year between Ash Wednesday and Trinity Sunday. Should this duty be neglected that person risked excommunication and a denial of Christian burial. An annual appearance is a far cry from weekly attendance. In 1362 Simon Islip, Archbishop of Canterbury, complained that on Sundays the shops were open, the pubs were full, and the churches were empty.

The Parliaments of Edward VI in 1552, and Elizabeth I in 1559, tried to impose penalties on men and women who failed to attend their parish church on Sundays. An act of Parliament in 1559 imposed a fine of 12 pence for every absence from church. In 1593 draconian measures were taken reflected in an act which imposed a prison sentence, exile and even death for failing to attend church for a month. How could this legislation be enforced? If an officer arrived to enforce the rule how would he go about it if people decided to comply by putting in a brief appearance? Watts observes that church wardens were reluctant to incur the hostility of their neighbours or influential people for fear of retribution. The idea of compulsion was ludicrous and is reflected in the complaint of one William Harrison who observed that for every person who attended church there were 'many hundreds' who listened and danced to pipers on village greens.¹ Coercive measures by their very nature tend to arouse enmity, contempt and ridicule.

Richard Baxter recalled the distractions that his family experienced when he was growing up in an English village. 'We could not,' wrote Baxter, 'on the Lord's day either read a chapter, or pray, or sing a psalm, or catechise or instruct a servant, for the noise of a piper and tabor, and shouting in the streets, and we were the common scorn of all the rabble in the streets, and were called Puritans, precisionists, hypocrites because we chose rather on the Lord's day to read the Scriptures rather than do what they did.'²

Why did English people begin to attend church?

In 1851 the most comprehensive survey ever made of religious observance in England showed that 39.13 per cent were in church on any Sunday morning (Church of England 20.19%, Nonconformist 17.02%, Roman Catholic 1.70%). In 1989 a census carried out by MARC Europe organisation produced the statistic of 9.55 per cent of the adult population in church or chapel on Sunday. In contrast to the figure 138 years earlier the largest group now was

RC at 3.36 per cent of the adult population compared to 2.95 for Anglicans and 3.22 for Nonconformists.

Before we examine why this decline took place we need to examine the fascinating question, Why did the English begin to attend church? How can we account for the astonishing figure of 39.13 per cent in church in 1851?

It is not generally known that the greatest expansion of evangelical religion ever to take place in England occurred through a protracted revival between the years 1792 and 1840. In this Second Great Awakening, sometimes referred to as the Forgotten Revival, the nation was more effectively evangelised than during the famous First Great Awakening under the Wesleys and George Whitefield.

When John Wesley died in 1791 the membership of the Wesleyan Methodists in Britain was 72,000. By 1828 their strength was 245,000 and within the next 15 years a further 100,000 were added. By 1850 they had 360,000 members which represented a five-fold increase in 60 years. During the same time the Primitive Methodists who originated in 1807 expanded from a handful to 110,000 members in 1851. During this same period the Particular Baptists who had been delivered from the deadly hyper-Calvinism of John Gill and John Brine experienced a marvellous expansion. In 1801 they had 652 places of worship, but by 1851 they had over 2,000 chapels with some 400,000 adherents. The Congregationalists who, like the Particular Baptists, were left out of the First Great Awakening were so revived that by the 1851 census they had over 500,000 adherents.

Between 1790 and 1840 one and a half million people were gathered into the Nonconformist churches of England and Wales, one out of every ten of the population of that time. Today this would represent a staggering five million converts.³

Michael Watts maintains that 'the Church of England laid the foundations of Evangelical revival and the expansion of Dissent by instilling into men and women, and especially into boys and girls, the necessity of adhering to a strict moral code, the breaches of which would be punished by eternal damnation. But the men and women, boys and girls, who tried to follow such a moral code found that they all had "sinned and come short of the glory of God".' He made an analysis of 670 conversion experiences of Nonconformists converted between 1780 and 1850 which showed that a third of the Wesleyan and a third of the Primitive Methodists were brought up in the Church of England. Watts concludes that 'the major factor which predisposed men and women to respond to the Evangelical message of the Methodists and Dissenters was fear:

fear of death, fear of judgment, fear above all of eternal torment in the fires of hell'.⁴

Why did the English stop going to church?

Watts suggests that in the 1880s the churches were just managing to hold the position they had attained in the early 1850s, but twenty years later decline was unmistakable. He then suggests that we must focus on the 1880s. If churches are to sustain their life and attendance there must be recruitment of the younger generation. Former church growth was due to the addition of teenagers and young people. From the 1880s on there was a decline in recruiting the younger generation. Was this due to the theory of evolution and to the doubt cast on the Old Testament by German scholars? Watts rejects that as the primary reason. It was not evolution or higher criticism that produced the deepest concern but rather the undermining of the doctrine of eternal punishment. F W Farrar's book *Eternal Hope* published in 1878 rejects the eternity of future punishment. Watts cites researcher Susan Budd's analysis of 150 secularists between 1850 and 1950. Budd found what her secularists found most objectionable about Christianity were the doctrines 'of eternal punishment, hell, the atonement, and damnation for unbelievers'. Watts suggests, 'Liberal Christians responded to this growing antipathy towards the doctrine of future punishment by soft-peddalling, reinterpreting, ignoring, and rejecting it.'⁵

Central to this subject is the testimony of C H Spurgeon and the Down Grade Controversy which began in 1887. Increasingly Spurgeon became alarmed by evidences of doctrinal decline. His principal contention with the Baptist Union was that apart from a statement about believer's baptism they did not have a creed. In an attempt to meet Spurgeon's requirement of a doctrinal statement Dr Joseph Angus drew up a declaration of belief with Spurgeon's brother James. This declaration was accepted by an overwhelming vote of 2,000 to 7. Yet to Spurgeon this was unacceptable because of equivocation on the crucial issue of eternal punishment. That biblical truth was by no means the only biblical doctrine subject to denial, but it was a central subject.⁶

With the entrance of theological liberalism and the exit of the gospel the churches began to empty and that emptying has continued. It is common all over England to see churches that have been turned into offices, flats or warehouses. That is a visual sign. The decline can also be documented with statistics and graphs with lines hurtling downward.⁷

The English and church attendance today

I was very surprised to read the 1989 MARC figure given above of a 9.55 per cent church attendance because I thought it was much lower and have often

heard the claim (undocumented) that only one per cent of Londoners attend church or chapel. It is very difficult to assess how many reliable evangelical churches exist in cities like Nottingham, Leicester, Bristol, Leeds or Newcastle. How is the figure of 3.22 per cent for Nonconformists made up? Most numerous will be the Charismatic and Pentecostal assemblies followed by Baptists, Independents, Brethren and ethnic churches such as the Chinese and Caribbean.

The MARC survey indicates that the churches that have been growing over the last twenty years have been the Independent Evangelical, the Pentecostal, the Afro-Caribbean and those conservative churches not affiliated to the Baptist Union.

What about the USA?

Watts draws attention to the fact that while church attendance in England has dropped from 40 to 10 percent from 1851 to 1997, in America the proportion who attend church has remained steady at about 40 per cent. This raises many questions. The first is that church attendance is one thing and real Bible Christianity which is actually practised is another. Our American readers will be the first to draw attention to the shallow nature of American Christianity. Willow Creek, Chicago, by sustaining an elaborate entertainment programme draws 15,000. Yet even when we have allowed for the superficial nature of things we also have to reckon with very large congregations where the doctrines of grace are preached. John MacArthur Jr in California is one example, Erwin Lutzer of the Moody Memorial Church another, and John Piper of Minneapolis yet another. We do not have mega churches like that in England today. Not only are there mega churches in America, there are mega seminaries such as Southern Seminary, Louisville, with 110 full time staff. In Britain we have nothing remotely comparable.

Watts suggests that the American churches to a far greater extent than English churches have held fast to the truths which produced the upsurge in faith in the first place in both countries in the first half of the 19th century, that is 'the doctrines of the sinfulness of man and of his ultimate destruction in the fires of hell unless rescued by the blood shed by Christ at Calvary'.⁸

Will the English return to church?

Will the figure of 40 per cent be attained again in England? There is no reason why not. The worship of our Triune God is the most exalted human activity



From left to right: Conrad Pomeroy, assistant pastor to John Waite at Wycliffe Independent Church, Sheffield, Pastor David Cooke of Albert Street Chapel, Jericho, Oxford, and Pastor Stephen Murphy of Dundalk Baptist Church, NI (one of a number of men from Ireland at the Carey Conference) see report, page 17

there is. 'Better is a day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere' (Ps 84:10). Let there be a revival of Holy Spirit-inspired biblical preaching combined with God-centred worship and very soon the existing churches will be far too small to contain the crowds. The fact that the Lord himself instituted the primacy of preaching is relevant still. That will not change. Without any assistance from advertising agencies and without a large auditorium or microphones John the Baptist drew large crowds to the wilderness. It was preaching that drew the people. I believe that kind of thing will occur more and more when biblical preaching about judgment, atonement, eternal heaven and hell is revived.

Biblical Christianity is ideally and perfectly suited to meet the challenges of the post-modern climate which now prevails. Is authority challenged? The authority of the Word is absolute. One text of God's truth is more powerful than all the world. Is objective knowledge denied? The Bible supplies us with an absolute framework from the creation of the universe to the second coming of Christ and beyond. Is there lack of conviction of sin? Let us preach the ten commandments clearly. The Bible tells us that the trees behind which sinners hide may change but the consciences of sinners have God's law imprinted there still, just as clearly as in any previous age. Man in sin is the same. Let us preach law and gospel and know that the Holy Spirit will convince the world of sin, righteousness and judgment (John 16:8). More than ever let us proclaim the uniqueness of Christ to save. He alone has atoned for sin. He alone can raise us from the dead. He alone is alive as the God-Man to be the only mediator between God and man. Never was biblical preaching more relevant.

It is not however as though the English will magically flock back to church. Preceding such a movement is the employment of those means prescribed by

God, namely, concerted prayer, repentance among the Lord's people, a return to faithful and relevant gospel preaching and hard work in outreach. We have to go out and win them back to church. As John Campbell of Australia asserts, 'The process of evangelism requires bridge-building... Craft and art groups, tennis clubs, music ministry, day care groups, golf days, kids' clubs have all been used effectively in appropriate situations.'

We are indebted to Michael Watts for his great writings in Church history. We are grateful to him for his outstanding lecture, *Why Did the English Stop Going to Church?* Dr Watts testifies that when he began his career as an historian he studied the life of John Clifford and the Down Grade Controversy of 1887 to 1992. He declares that at that time his sympathies lay entirely with Clifford. 'It was not surprising that a young researcher should have scant sympathy for Spurgeon, the man who took some pride in his later years in the accusation that it would take a surgical operation to get a new idea into his head. Yet a hundred years after the Down Grade Controversy, I have to confess that both in his interpretation of history, and in his prognosis for the future it was Spurgeon, not Clifford, who was right. The English churches of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries like the Presbyterian churches of the eighteenth century, did indeed abandon "the faith which was once delivered to the saints". That is why they have been so singularly unsuccessful in retaining the adherence of English men and women. The Tractarian leader, Edward Bowerie Pusey, once commented that nothing keeps men from the pleasures of sin "but the love of God and the fear of Hell", and that it is "the fear of Hell" that "drives people back to God". The English churches by and large ignored his advice, and as a result English men and women stopped attending their services.'

References

- 1 Michael Watts. *Why Did the English Stop Going to Church?* The cost of this 16 page booklet is £2.26 including postage, available by writing to Dr Williams's Library 14 Gordon Square, London WC1H OAG. Make your cheque out to 'Dr Williams's Library'.
- 2 Neal, *History of the Puritans*, Vol 1, p650.
- 3 Paul Cook, *The Forgotten Revival*, The Westminster Conference Papers for 1984. I have gleaned the material on the period 1792 to 1851 from this fine paper.
- 4 Michael Watts, *ibid* page 7 of this author's excellent book *The Dissenters – From the Reformation to the French Revolution* Clarendon Press, Oxford, 542 pp, 1978.
- 5 *ibid* p10.
- 6 David Kingdon, *Spurgeon and the Downgrade*, published as part of the book *A Marvelous Ministry*, Soli Deo Gloria, USA, 1993.
- 7 See *RT 107*, front inside cover for four graphs: Methodist, C of E, Baptist and Congregationalist.
- 8 Watts, *ibid* p13.
- 9 John Campbell, *Communicating the Gospel in a Post-modern World*, in *Loving the God of Truth*, Toronto Baptist Seminary (130 Gerrard Street East, Toronto, M5A 3T4, Canada) 1996, 15 Canadian dollars. John Campbell's reference to golf reminded me that a retired man with whom I play golf was baptised last year. Several years of church attendance preceded his conversion.
- 10 Watts *ibid* p14.

‘Murder in the Cathedral’

Or

Whatever Happened in Southwark?

David Streater

This article is not concerned with the crime in Canterbury Cathedral of 29 December 1170 when Thomas à Beckett was murdered but with the more serious events in Southwark Cathedral of 16 November 1996. On that Saturday, the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement (LGCM) celebrated its twentieth anniversary with a daytime exhibition of gay sex in a hall close to the cathedral. In the evening a service was held with the permission of the Provost and Chapter at which John Gladwin, the Bishop of Guildford, preached.

This was in spite of an immense number of protests from ministers, churches and individual Christians. A year earlier Church Society had asked the House of Bishops to distance themselves from the LGCM. Reform Southwark, a local branch of the movement under the chairmanship of Philip Hacking of Keswick and many other organisations had protested. Ann Atkins maintained on the BBC's *Thought for the Day* that the vast majority of people and parishes were outraged by the event. All this was to no avail. The service and celebration went ahead. With that service a Rubicon was crossed.

Whatever may be said on this subject the fact that this service was permitted at all indicates a sympathy toward this movement by episcopal and other leaders of the Church of England. At the same time it demonstrates an apathy towards biblical teaching and to those who hold to biblical authority. The question must be asked as to why this Rubicon was crossed? We shall endeavour to answer that question by looking at the agenda of the Gay Movement and trace the continuing doctrinal and moral downgrade within the leadership of the Church of England.

The Gay Agenda

The events surrounding the homosexual lobby in this country are not pleasant, nor are they spontaneous, but carefully orchestrated. The object is not simply the acceptance of a perverted practice which had become legal among

consenting adults following the Wolfenden Report. It is the demand for its full legitimisation. This was not foreseen by Parliament when the legislation was discussed in the 1960s.

In spite of the claim by the homosexual lobby that they represent ten per cent of the population, the figure is probably nearer one per cent which makes even more audacious the present demands for full rights such as same-sex marriages and the right to adopt children. There is even demand for the age of consent to be lowered, which opens up a wide field for proselytising to their cause and leaves young people unprotected and vulnerable to be influenced in that direction. The demand itself indicates that the figure of ten per cent is strongly inflated for propaganda purposes.

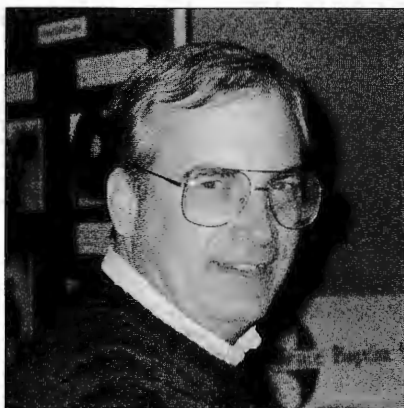
The Episcopal Church

The question has to be asked why is the established church the main area of conflict? The answer to that question arises from the practice of liberation theology with its Marxist principles. Any group which appears to be disadvantaged is given victim status and those who resist for whatever reason, good or bad, are regarded as the oppressors. In simple terms it is the teaching of human rights without any responsibility. It is naked secular humanism which has no regard for God's revelation. But we repeat the question: why should it be the church?

The answer lies across the Atlantic in the Episcopal Church of the United States which since the 1960s has become ever more liberal in its attitude to revelation and which by now has largely departed from virtually any recognisable relationship to the Christian faith. The Marxists recognised that people of good will but without strong principles are open to manipulation if the propaganda demonstrates a human 'good cause.' The history of Marxist liberation movements can be traced through liberal churchmen. What happened in the United States in the 60s and 70s is being repeated here because the ascendant liberalism has lost the root of its faith in the Word of God and sound doctrine. Behaviour always follows belief.

Apostasy from the Gospel

In spite of serious endeavours by the LGCM and its allies to wrest the Scriptures to legitimise homosexuality by some strange exegesis and analogies of faith, it is quite clear that the Bible condemns homosexual conduct and the movement knows it. A well-known artistic figure tore a Bible apart publicly because of its condemnation of such activity. Yet some leaders of the Church of England are apparently unable to discern that the legitimisation of the movement is apostasy from the gospel.



Visiting speakers at the Carey Conference (see page 17), on the left Pastor Noel Espinosa of Manila, Philippines, and Dr John Currid of Reformed Theological Seminary, Jackson, Mississippi

The Archbishop of Canterbury, preaching at Great St Mary's, Cambridge on Sunday November 24 spoke of those who had quietly protested or demonstrated outside the cathedral as 'bullying, loud-mouthed controversialists'. That is a very unpleasant phrase to use of any persons, especially when the main tenor of his argument was one of love being central to morality! John Gladwin's sermon in Southwark has the opening paragraph thanking the LGCM for their sensitivity and welcome to him. His text was taken from Ephesians 4:6, 'There is one God and Father of all...' His concern is unity and the affirmation of all persons whatever their moral standing. In the hall close by there was an exhibition of literature which according to the movement's own publicity must be considered at best as pornographic.

With this it is clear that amongst some there is total confusion concerning not only the gospel but the place of the Moral Law. The downgrading of the Moral Law inevitably downgrades the holiness of God. To downgrade the holiness of God is to destroy the gospel of Christ's saving work. To speak of any gospel in these terms is to come under the anathema of the apostle Paul that this is a gospel which is no gospel. This is a very serious situation but there is something even more serious.

Judicial Blindness

We are not left simply to attempt to deal with the subject of homosexuality from the reference in Leviticus. The opening chapter of Romans is clear that to

espouse this unnatural perversion, either by active promotion or passive toleration, indicates that society has been given over by God because of its sin and has been judicially abandoned. (A careful reading of Romans chapter 1 will confirm this.)

It is in this context that the movement to ordain women must be seen as a step upon the slippery slope which refused to take the natural meaning of Scripture and therefore allowed the natural meaning of Scripture to be misinterpreted.

What has happened in the Established Church is bound to be followed by such demands in the Nonconformist churches and even among those churches which are regarded as sound and orthodox.

The Moral Downgrade

The position in the Church of England today is on a knife edge. Because the leadership has abandoned God's Word and therefore has abandoned sound doctrine there is an appalling declension in morality. A recent attempt in General Synod to bring back a workable system of discipline was so amended by the clever ploy of the liberals that bishops will be able to shield homosexuals from church discipline and the conduct of some clergy in same-sex relationships is already an open scandal.

What will be the result? In a pastoral letter written to the bishops in 1995, I warned that the Church of England faced the stark choice of either repenting towards God or facing judgment. No repentance has been evidenced. The reverse would seem to be the case. In addition, those who have repented of their perverse ways are now being sorely hindered in their Christian life and witness by the conduct of the leaders who actively permit such behaviour. A reference to millstones is appropriate here.

It is interesting to note that in the United States a magazine has investigated a group of episcopal clergy and published their findings which are so shocking that even the liberal leaders in the United States have been forced to make serious inquiry as to what is happening. The fact is that when people depart from the righteous ways of a holy God their reward is that they are given over from sin to sin until sin finally destroys them. The only answer to such wickedness is the proclamation of the free grace of God in Jesus Christ and him crucified and that men should repent and believe the gospel.

David Straub of *Reformed Baptist Mission Services* (RBMS) Carlisle, PA, USA reports on his visit to **Belarus, Serbia and Bulgaria.**

Belarus: Georgi Viazovski is an excellent man. I don't know of anyone his equal in Belarus. He works very diligently at the translation and publishing work as well as evangelism and pastoral duties in connection with the church. Bob Carr and I were warmly received by everyone. There is a solid core of 22 members and another 15 or so attending the meetings.

The last six or seven years have seen growth in evangelical churches in Belarus (Baptist and Pentecostal.) They have not only grown in size but also approximately doubled in number as well, with 150 Baptist and 160 Pentecostal churches. The initial growth spurt after 'perestroika' has diminished but churches are seizing the liberty afforded them to evangelise. The future is uncertain politically, economically and with respect to their religious liberties. Not nearly as many reforms have been enacted in Belarus as in Russia, and they see signs of reverting back to Communism. Georgi stands to have a leadership role in Belarus. Calvinism is hated and vilified by Baptist Union leaders and most of the pastors. But he is not deterred from the publishing



David Straub in his office replete with international communication lines

programme and the unique stand of the church. It has not joined the Baptist Union because of their anti-Calvinist stance.

Serbia: Simo Ralevic was delighted to see me; the political situation in Serbia does not encourage visitors. He described 1996 as the most difficult year in his nearly thirty years of ministry. If you read the report in *Reformation Today* 154, you will know about the accusations made about him by authorities investigating suicides. This is just another tactic to discredit his ministry not only locally, but also his literature which goes throughout the Balkan peninsula. In addition he had a series of meetings at the university in Novi Sad late in the year which were infiltrated by the secret police. Toward the end of the

week they revealed themselves publicly and threatened all who sought to follow Simo's teaching or in any way identify with him.

The same happened in his church in Pec. A man attended for months, got to know all the members, then began visiting them privately making such threats. In 1994 Simo had as many as 110 attending services in Pec; now he is down to less than thirty. So the gains that were made, especially from refugees, have vanished. There is only one refugee family with him and they travel 35 miles by bus when they can afford it. On top of it all, the week I was with him his printer in Novi Sad informed him that he would no longer print his materials, no doubt due to pressure from the Orthodox Church.

In other areas of the former Yugoslavia, the Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches, of which Simo and his brother Cedo are a part, has opened new works! I believe there are 13 churches now, the majority of them near and north of Belgrade, not to the south where Nis and Pec are situated.

Cedo Ralevic's work in Nis is quite similar. During the war as many as 400 were attending, which included many refugees. This created many problems, a large enough meeting place being one. Today they have a little more than half that number. That still represents significant growth since after the church's first ten years they had a baptized membership of about 35. I

had the great joy of seeing some of the refugees whom I had previously met going on with the Lord. But there are so few employed among the 225 attending that they can barely afford to rent premises for their Sunday services. Heating is extra and they often meet in the cold. There were nearly 50 meeting in Cedo's home for the mid-week meeting, again with very little heating in use.

For all his faults, President Milosevic has treated all religions equally, which is the best treatment evangelicals have received for years. Simo and Cedo fear that a collapse of the Milosevic government will bring a renewed alignment between the state and the Orthodox Church which would bring further persecution upon evangelicals.

Bulgaria: Spiritually there was not a great deal to encourage me. In rural areas the Evangelicals are fiercely discriminated against; in cities they are barely tolerated. Evangelicals are found in the Baptist Union, the Congregational denomination and Pentecostal churches. There are a few other groups in addition to the Orthodox Church, but they are liberal. Here we find the same vilification of Calvinism. The brother in Petrich, Ivan Dimitrov, is the lone voice for Calvinism that I know of among pastors in the denomination.

The one bright spot in Sofia is the presence of an evangelical publishing company, *New Man Publishing*, which is led by a Baptist who is a Calvinist. I

met him after the morning church service, then spent an hour or more with him on my way to the airport the day I left. He has translated and published some Lloyd-Jones material and John Stott commentaries, as well as general titles from men such as Josh McDowell (very popular in eastern Europe) and Dobson. Many of these can be used in the few Bible colleges and institutes in the country, so they do quite well. He has an agreement with Philip Grist to do any of the *Grace Publications Trust* series. These would need a subsidy to get into print since they would have a more limited market and slower sales. To fund a half dozen titles in that series – Calvin, Owen, Ryle, Flavel, etc. would be an excellent opportunity for our churches.

Kenya

Pastor Geoff Thomas of Aberystwyth visited Pastors Keith Underhill and Naphtally Ogallo at Trinity Baptist Church, Nairobi recently. He sent these items for thanksgiving. Congratulations to Geoff for his first ever e-mail.

1. The arrival of Nigel Lacey and the ways he has relieved Keith of many pressures by visiting churches in some areas and helping with the teaching and lecturing of the pastors who are involved with theological training.

2. The growing numbers of men who want to take this theological course

and of churches who seek a close identification with the testimony of Trinity Baptist Church to the doctrines of grace. These men come from all over Kenya (a couple from Uganda) and from different denominational backgrounds. The opportunities for the spread of the truth are limitless.

3 The pastors' conference last week with thirty men seems to be judged one of the most encouraging they have had, with unity, discernment and fellowship. I had help in speaking six times and answering questions for a few hours.

4 The church was full (200+) on Sunday morning, and over sixty came back to the smaller evening service at 5.30. The Saturday afternoon conference with two sessions went happily with over 60 attending.

5 The key leading families who have been with Keith for twenty-five years and given ballast and structure to the congregation continue to support and serve the work wisely.

6. Naphtally is getting steadily stronger after his operation, and is learning to live with some recurring pain. His gifts as pastor and personal worker are immense.

Mozambique

After several years of diligent preparation, Karl and Glynn Peterson along with their two small children

have begun work in Mozambique (CP 410, Maputo) They are much helped by veteran missionary Arthur Hallett from neighbouring Zimbabwe who has guided Karl in his previous visits. Karl writes:

During November Arthur and I drove to the capital, Maputo, for a church leadership seminar, not to take part, but I had the chance to meet many men with whom we will work in the years to come. I was also able to settle on a house for our family. The central location in Maputo has the advantage of easy access to whatever we need in town and the disadvantage of 24 hour noise right outside our window – our driveway opens out onto one of the city’s major bus stops!

The Lord in his goodness has also provided us with a 1982 VW Jetta, not the conventional ‘Africa Bush Machine’ but it seems quite reliable to get us around town. Car theft is a fact of life here in Maputo, so the rust and dents on the car keep it from being a likely candidate for thieves.

Along with Patrick and Grace Mulenga of Zambia we serve on a Missions Committee for a group of churches. The committee encourages churches to mature through the ministry of Bible teaching (preaching, holding seminars and conferences) and to assist in planting new churches by working alongside Mozambican evangelists. I have been asked to work with evangelist Henriques in two locations. One has about 15 new

Christians who have been meeting for six months and have just been organised into a formal church. 11 were baptised in the warm waters of the Indian Ocean on Christmas Eve. On the following Sunday the church celebrated the Lord’s Supper for the first time. It is exciting to see their eagerness to learn and follow the Lord. We teach basic Bible doctrine there every Sunday morning and Wednesday evening. Henriques has a burden to see a Sunday School develop and I see it as my job to take his vision and make it a reality. Pray for this group in Matola (just outside Maputo) as they grow in their new faith and now seek to acquire some land for a church building.

Then about 20 miles to the west of Maputo we have been invited to teach the Scriptures to about 15 people in a community called Boane. We meet twice a week under a shady tree and teach the basics of the good news of God’s grace. Some have never before heard of Christ and his good gifts. Henriques and I are actively visiting people in their homes in both of these places to confirm them in their new faith, ground them well in biblical teaching and develop local church leadership.

From February I expect to teach in an evening Bible School and Glynn looks forward to meeting some of the women more regularly though we have already enjoyed the opportunity of inviting our new African friends to our home for meals.

Carey Conference for Ministers 1997



Left to right: Alex Fabishenko, Tony Simon, Gil Alon, Baruch Maoz, Richard Gibson, Eitan Kashtan, and John Theodore

Delegates to the conference this year included seven associated with ministry to the Jews: three from Grace and Truth Christian Congregation, Rishon LeTzion, Israel, including Pastor Baruch Maoz; two from the Reformed Baptist Church in Jerusalem including Pastor Tony Simon; Richard Gibson of Christian Witness to Israel; and Nigel Browne who is shortly to move to Israel and be associated with Grace and Truth.

Geoff Thomas was on top form in opening the conference with a biography of Robert Murray M'Cheyne. He was presented to us as a model of godliness to be emulated today. Baruch Maoz gave two papers on preaching from the Old Testament. In the first he outlined principles, and then he expounded Hosea to illustrate his method. John Currid, associate professor at Reformed Theological Seminary, Jackson, USA, also spoke from the OT. He demonstrated Amos' preaching of the absolute sovereignty of God, and made very helpful pastoral applications. The discussion which followed was most edifying.

Noel Espinosa was our speaker from the Philippines. He is a pastor, and principal of the new Grace Ministerial Academy in Manila. He gave a high quality paper on the need for theological education in an age of post-modern confusion and pragmatism. He echoed some of the themes of David Wells' book *No Place for Truth*. Peter Parkinson's paper on 'Caring for the Disadvantaged' encouraged us to care for the needy around us, and drew from his breadth of experience as chairman of the Charity *Caring for Life*. Erroll Hulse gave two papers, the first (in place of Earl Blackburn who was unable to come) on the subject of inter-church unity and the second on mobilising evangelism which is relevant in our post-modern age.

The next conference is booked at Swanwick for 7th – 9th January, 1998. Principal speakers, Dr Gaius Davies and Pastors Martin Holdt of South Africa and John Campbell of Australia.

Report by Bill James

The Preacher and his Call to Preach

Robert Sheehan

1. Who should preach?

When a church needs a preacher to whom should it turn? In many places it is now common practice to assume that almost anyone can fill the gap and preach. Such preaching is generally known as 'lay preaching', and as a practice it is relatively novel. Is it, however, objectionable?

The main objection that may be raised against lay preaching is that it seems to miss completely the whole notion of a 'call'. Historically, the Church has always held that none should preach the gospel but those who are called by God to do so. It has been maintained that just as no man may appoint himself, or be appointed by his peers, to be his nation's ambassador but must be appointed by the Head of the government he represents so, before a man is accepted as an ambassador of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20), he must have a call from God.

2. Is the 'call to preach' a biblical idea?

Among the New Testament passages which refer to a call to preach, there are six of particular importance. The reason why New Testament passages must be found is that it is not adequate to argue that because Old Testament prophets needed a call, New Testament preachers do. Indeed it is not even sufficient to argue that because New Testament apostles needed a call, New Testament preachers do. While a study of the calls of the prophets and apostles becomes important once the call of the preacher is established as a requirement of the New Testament, the opposite order of approach is questionable.

The six New Testament passages that emphasise the need of a call from God to exercise the ministry of preaching are:

i. Matthew 9:37-38. In his great concern for the spiritual welfare of the people, our Lord described their teachers as harvesters. The appointment of such harvesters was not left to human whim. The Lord of the harvest was to be asked to send out workers into his harvest. It was the Lord's responsibility to send out the workers. Their quantity and quality depended on him.

ii. Acts 13:1-4. This chapter does not record Paul's call to apostleship. That occurred on the road to Damascus and was not mediated through men (Acts

26:16; Gal 1:1). Acts 13 records the appointment of Paul and Barnabas to a new work. No longer were they to be teachers at Antioch but international preachers or missionaries. Such preaching in foreign parts could not be undertaken at their own volition. They had to be set apart by the church to the work to which the Holy Spirit had called them.

The fact that the Holy Spirit alone was their sender is emphasised by the use of the perfect tense in v.1 ('the work to which I have called them') and by the fact that the fourth verse attributes their sending explicitly and especially to the Holy Spirit.

iii. Acts 20:28. The elders who had been appointed to shepherd the church at Ephesus and feed it with God's Word were, according to the apostle Paul, neither self-appointed, nor merely church-elected, but were made overseers by the Holy Spirit. He qualified them and enabled them for this great work.

iv. Romans 10:15. In his remarkable exposition of divine sovereignty and human responsibility in Romans 9-11 the apostle Paul emphasised the necessity of calling upon the name of the Lord to be saved. In a string of logically connected clauses, he argued that no-one can believe in a Christ of whom they have not heard, that no-one will hear without a preacher, and that no-one can preach without being sent.

While some have interpreted the sender to be the church, the analogy with other passages would suggest the sender is God. Throughout the New Testament it is clear that the main responsibility for spreading the gospel is the work of men specially commissioned to do so. Preachers commissioned by nobody and answerable to no-one are not part of the New Testament scene.

v. 1 Corinthians 12:28. In the list of gifts that are found in the Church, Paul begins with the assertion that the teachers among them, as well as the other gifts, are God-appointed. The emphasis in the biblical use of the verb in such contexts is upon divine ordination. They were God-appointed.

vi. Ephesians 4:11f. In a parallel passage to the one in Corinthians Paul describes Christ as giving pastors and teachers to his Church. The Greek text emphasises that it was HE who gave pastors and teachers. They did not take this work to themselves.

Preachers, whether viewed as harvesters, missionaries, elders, pastors or teachers, are all seen to be called of God to their work.

3. What is this call to preach?

The whole question of the call is not an easy matter. There can be such an emphasis on 'the call' that it appears to be something mystical: a voice that is heard, an impression that is felt, or a leading in the soul. How often men preach for no better reason than that they felt led to preach, as though feeling was the be-all and end-all of being called!

Of course, I am not arguing that a call is unfelt, but that there is far more to true calling than mere feeling. The call is a God-given conviction that one should preach the gospel.

How does God make a man know that God wants him to preach the gospel? God makes his will known by persuading a man's mind and conscience, and by persuading the minds and consciences of his brethren, that, when tested by the Scriptures, he has the qualifications in himself which reasonably point out preaching as his work.

Tabulated, we are asserting that a man may conclude that he is called to preach when:

- a. God persuades his mind;
- b. God persuades his conscience;
- c. God persuades the minds of his brethren;
- d. God persuades the consciences of his brethren that he has the biblical qualifications to preach.

The combination of mind and conscience is very important. The mind judges whether a person is able; the conscience whether he is fit. The mind assesses whether, according to the scriptural standards, he is able to fulfil his role. The conscience bears testimony whether he is suited in character and feels the sense of obligation that his role demands.

The role of conscience in Paul's ministry is clear. He felt under a sense of necessity to preach. Not to have done so would have been a dereliction of duty and have brought him into serious conflict with God (1 Cor 9:16).

The combination of his personal conviction and that of his Christian brethren is also very important. Men can feel called to preach out of spiritual pride, self-confidence, love of applause, or a romantic view of preaching. Other people are often much more objective than we are. They can protect the churches from unsuitable men, and can protect the uncalled man from himself!

On the positive side, the assent and support of brethren can also be a great encouragement to the truly called man, for by this he is confirmed that his call



Hugh Collier (left) pastor at Great Ellingham, Norfolk, and Henry Dixon pastor at Poplar in East London at the Carey Conference (for report see page 17)

to preach is not merely a matter of his own conceit. Of course, by his brethren we do not mean family and friends who have a vested interest in not upsetting him, but those of spiritual wisdom and maturity in the church who can advise him objectively and scripturally!

4. Where are the biblical qualifications of preachers set out?

Primary attention has to be paid to two biblical passages: 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-10. These scriptures have to be studied openly and honestly in the sight of God. Both the candidate himself and his spiritual guides in the church have to test his character and gifts by these scriptures.

An honest comparison of ourselves with the scriptural qualifications is not without difficulties. The more tender-conscienced will rule themselves out on every occasion because they look at the standards from a perspective akin to the teachers of sinless perfection! As with John Knox it may be, in such a case, that the opinions of the brethren are to be given greater weight than the hesitations of the man.

It is equally as dishonest to deny what God has worked in us by grace as it is to claim graces that we do not possess. It is a false humility that refuses to recognise gifts and abilities that God has granted. God is impatient with thinly veiled excuses when he is calling a man to his work (Exod 4:10-16; Jer 1:6-10). The Scriptures have to be studied with a cry to God, 'Let conscience speak!'

1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-10 contain twenty qualifications the preacher is to have:

1 – *blameless, above reproach* (1 Tim 3:7; Titus 1:6,7). This is a description of a general characteristic of his whole life. He is to be unassailable, above just criticism, unable justly to be called to account for any scandalous or reprehensible behaviour.

2 – *a one-woman man* (1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:6). The emphasis in the passage is not so much that such a man has to be married or can only have had one marriage, but that he is faithful in the marriage relationship. It is historically arguable that more damage has been done to the Christian Church, both in its witness to the world and in the damage to its members, by the immorality of its preachers than anything else, with the possible exception of heresy. The witness of many a church and the life of many a Christian has been marred for decades by the sexual sin of its leaders. The man who is a preacher has to pay special attention to his marriage relationship and especially to his chastity.

3 – *a man who governs his household well* (1 Tim 3:4-5; Titus 1:6). Writing to Timothy, Paul spoke of a man managing his household well and used a verb which means to lead from the front. The preacher governs his house firstly by his example. He also describes him as taking care of the church, the exact verb used to describe the Good Samaritan's care for the injured man, implying warm, compassionate, practical care.

The effect of his leadership is to be that his children are faithful and obedient, and not disorderly and out of control. An undisciplined household is no commendation for the gospel and disqualifies a man from being a preacher. Preachers have to be examples to others and not like the Pharisees who were all talk and no practice.

4 – *not self-willed* (Titus 1:7). The preacher is an overseer, a guardian who watches over the spiritual care of the flock. He acts not as a self-appointed, self-pleasing dictator but as a steward responsible to God and accountable to him for his teaching to, and treatment of, the sheep. His role is one of a steward and servant, not a dictator. As such, God's will, not his own will, has to be his rule.

5 – *not quick-tempered and pugnacious* (1 Tim 3:3; Titus 1:7). The man who quickly gets angry and 'enjoys nothing better than a fight', whether verbally or with fists, is unsuited to the ministry of the Word. Paul taught Timothy that God's servant had to avoid a quarrelsome spirit and patiently instruct those

who disagreed (2 Tim 2:24-26). The aggressive preacher, volatile and venomous, will get a following, but from the mob not the godly.

6 – *not lingering over wine* (1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7). The word indicates a person who is by the side of wine, i.e. it is his constant companion. He is devoted to it. The man whose courage and stimulation comes from the bottle is not suited to Christian leadership. His strength must rather come from the Spirit of God (cf Eph 5:18).

7 – *not violent* (1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7). This word is related to a verb meaning to strike. This man is a bully and rules by force and fear. In contrast, Timothy is commanded that preachers must be gentle, a word that implies the ability to look dispassionately at a situation and respond fairly and with forbearance.

8 – *not a money-loving gain-seeker* (1 Tim 3:3; Titus 1:7). The financial rewards available in the modern ministry vary greatly from situation to situation. How much a man earns, however, is not really the point. It is his attitude and motivation which are in view. Is he covetous? Is he always scheming to get as much as he can for himself? Will he do anything for money? Is he always dropping large hints about what he would like? A man who worships money cannot lead a church which worships God.

9 – *not a new convert* (1 Tim 3:6). The word means 'newly planted'. The main problem with a new plant is that it has not had time to take root and is peculiarly vulnerable to dangers. When a new Christian is given too much responsibility too soon he easily gains an inflated view of himself and his abilities and becomes proud. Responsibility given too soon ruins men.

From a biblical standpoint, humility is essential to proper leadership. Indeed, it is arguably the distinctive mark of Christian leadership according to the teaching of our Lord (Mark 10:35-45).

Items 4-9 have been negative. What a man must not be. The mind and conscience must be allowed free rein to ask these questions honestly in the sight of God:

- a. Am I more concerned about my will or obeying God?
- b. Am I quick tempered? Do I like a fight?
- c. Am I fond of my drink?
- d. Do I frighten people or am I approachable?
- e. How important is money to me?
- f. Am I mature enough to lead others?

10 – *hospitable* (1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:8). While hospitality expresses itself in an attitude to and sharing with strangers, the emphasis is on love for strangers. It is easy to show love and interest towards our families and friends but what of those we do not know well and who may be in some ways different from us? In the Christian leader hospitality includes a love for those who have no special reason to expect that love and interest.

11 – *a lover of what is good* (Titus 1:8). If a man was described as ‘a lover of what is good’ in Greek society, it was a title of honour. Such a man would have his mind set not on trivia and things questionable but on what is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent and praiseworthy (Phil 4:8). A preacher who feeds his mind on rubbish, and is known for shallow thinking and reading, will hardly be equipped to instruct others. He does not have to love the obscure but the excellent.

12 – *sober-minded* (1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:8). The preacher has to be sound in mind and judgment and not given to irrational extremes. He has to be a man of good judgment and stable in his opinions. He cannot afford to be like the Athenians, attracted to everything new; nor to have the instability of being tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine. He must be steady when others are double-minded (Acts 17:21; Eph 4:14; James 1:7).

13 – *just and righteous* (Titus 1:8). One Greek word contains both ideas. The man of God is to be concerned to do what is right and to shun what is wrong. He is to be equitable in his treatment of others.

14 – *pious (hosios)* (Titus 1:8). The term used is fairly unusual and has a meaning which describes those who are pledged to obedience to God. In Israel it marked out those who were intent on fulfilling their covenant obligations. Parallel concepts would be found in terms such as ‘sanctified’ and ‘consecrated’. The Christian leader has to have a serious intention to live a life for God in obedience to his Word.

15 – *self-disciplined* (1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:8). Paul compares himself to an athlete when writing to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 9:24). One of the aspects of an athlete’s life is self-discipline or rigid training. The man of God has to be as rigorous about his training as the athlete. He cannot afford to develop a lazy, indifferent lifestyle but must learn more than any other person to use his time in a manner that reveals he knows that he is accountable (Heb 13:17).

16 – *respectable* (1 Tim 3:2). The idea is that the preacher has to be well-mannered and honourable in his behaviour and not an uncouth man who rejects

all social proprieties. To be rude and unconventional is not a sign of spiritual liberty but of human immaturity.

17 – *of good reputation with those outside the church* (1 Tim 3:7). If a man gets a bad name because he is a Christian that is his privilege and glory, but a bad name for anything else is a disqualification (1 Peter 4:14-16). A man who was known as dishonest in business or who is a bad neighbour, yet who is important in the church, is unsuited to leadership. The gospel is to be adorned by our good works not rejected because of our bad works (Matt 5:16; Rom 2:24).

Items 1-3 and 10-17 have been positive: what a man must be. The mind and conscience must be allowed free rein to ask these questions honestly in the sight of God:

- a. Is my life open to just criticism?
- b. Am I treating my wife correctly?
- c. Is my home orderly?
- d. Am I hospitable to others than my friends and natural contacts?
- e. Do I fill my mind with good things and relish them?
- f. Am I stable or always changing ground?
- g. Am I concerned for what is right?
- h. Am I consecrated to obeying God?
- i. Is my life well-disciplined or disorderly?
- j. Am I well-mannered or do I like to shock and be different?
- k. Can my family, neighbours or colleagues justly accuse me of hypocrisy?

The first seventeen qualifications have been to do with character. It needs to be emphasised again that 85% of the preacher's qualifications have to do with character and only 15% to do with ability. This is not because ability is unimportant but because character is so important.

18 – *a man who has been taught the truth faithfully* (Titus 1:9). The first duty of a pastor is to know the truth. He who does not know the truth cannot teach it. Knowing the truth, of course, means knowing the Bible and its message.

The greatest temptation of the man who believes he is called to preach is to want to jump into the pulpit before he has adequate knowledge and understanding to do so. Knowing the Bible is more than knowing the order of the books and the general history. It includes having a clear grasp of the theology of the Bible in a thorough and systematic way. A preacher uninterested in theology is like a doctor uninterested in medicine!

19 – *a man who himself is orthodox in doctrine* (Titus 1:9). Writing to Timothy, Paul required the truth to be passed on to faithful men who would teach others. The men had to be faithful as well as their message (2 Tim 2:2): a trustworthy message from trustworthy men. A passion for theological novelty or an interest in theoretical speculation is not a healthy sign in a prospective preacher.

20 – *a man with ability to teach* (1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:10). A man may be a brilliant scholar but if he has no speaking ability and cannot teach ordinary men and women the truth of God plainly he has no place in the pulpit. The ability to teach must neither be confused with the ability to speak much nor the ability to keep hearers entertained! The key to all good teaching is the ability to edify, to build up the hearers (1 Cor 14:12).

This teaching ability will involve the ability to take sound doctrine and to use it positively and negatively. The positive preaching of the truth will encourage the hearers to obey God. The negative preaching will silence the heretics and dissuade the people from being misled away from the Bible.

This ability to speak positively and negatively is an essential part of aptitude to teach. It is not enough to preach either positively or negatively; both are essential. A preacher must be ready for the pleasant work of proclaiming positive truth and the more difficult confrontational work of declaring against evil and heresy. The preacher is not to aim to be popular but faithful. The sheep are to be gathered and the wolves driven away (Titus 1:9-10).

The mind and conscience must be allowed to have free rein to ask these questions in the sight of God:

- a. Do I yet have enough knowledge of the Scriptures and their doctrine to teach others?
- b. Do I really believe the doctrine that I have been taught and hold to it firmly as God's truth?
- c. Have I teaching ability?
- d. Have I the readiness to be positive and negative as the situation and the biblical text demands?

The answers that the preacher himself, and his advisers, give to these questions as they search out the truth before God will determine whether or not a man is called to preach and ready to preach. Are you? If deficiencies have been found then they need to be confessed and put right before there is any proceeding to preaching.

From Persecution to Prosperity

The Dissenters: Volume II. The Expansion of Evangelical Nonconformity 1791-1859. Michael R. Watts. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1995. £75.00 Hardcover, 911pp.

A Review Article by Sharon James

The first volume of Michael Watts' projected three-volume history of English and Welsh Dissent appeared in 1978 (*The Dissenters from the Reformation to the French Revolution*). This next volume has been eagerly awaited, for the years 1791-1851 arguably include the period of the greatest influence Nonconformity has ever had. Watts has conducted a vast amount of meticulous research into the primary sources and his work must now be *the* standard text for any historian dealing with Nonconformity in this period.

Watts deals with the Evangelical dissenters: the Independents, Baptists and Methodists, but also with the Unitarians and Quakers. At many points the contrasts between these two groupings are fascinating. The fragmentation of Methodism into many schisms is clearly explained. The enormous expansion of Nonconformity between 1791 and 1851 is analysed. Pages 682-870 consist of detailed tables and maps, laying out the information of the 1851 census for every area in England and Wales. Material gleaned from baptismal records where appropriate is analysed for information concerning occupational status of male dissenters.

The beginning of the modern missionary movement is outlined. Watts confirms that it was Andrew Fuller's necessary challenge to hyper-Calvinism which liberated Calvinistic Baptists to take their part in an exciting new age of expansion. Of the early missionaries, he writes:

The devotion, courage, and self-sacrifice with which these men and women went out to save their fellow men is a testimony to the quality of the lives of nineteenth-century Nonconformists, and of nineteenth-century Britons, at their very best. They gave up not only homes and comfort, but frequently life itself, in their efforts to do good to others (p15).

The home mission endeavour is also described. Sunday schools, itinerant preaching, associational endeavour to support church planting, and similar 'means' were employed with great energy and success. Meeting places are vividly portrayed: barns, octagons and 'temples' in the earlier period; an

increasing tendency to large Gothic style buildings in the later period. Equally interesting is the section on finances. In the earlier part of the period 'begging tours' were commonplace: ministers would itinerate with the object of collecting funds, often for church buildings. The cost and time involved were disproportionate to the amounts raised. For example one minister over a period of four years left his church on 'begging excursions' for forty-three weeks, during which time he travelled 2,132 miles, mostly on foot. Yet he raised only £140 (p226). Such tours gave way eventually to greater associational organisation. Pew rents were an accepted part of Nonconformist life, foreign as the idea may seem to us.

Attention is given to ministerial education, training, pay, and social status. The shift from the heroic days of itinerant preaching in all weathers and conditions to the respectable image of 'the Reverend' is clearly depicted. There are striking accounts of the persecution endured by some dissenters until well into the period:

William Bramwell [a preacher] in the Blackburn circuit in 1787, had to defend himself with a large stick against bulldogs that were let loose on him whenever he passed a tan-yard. At Epperstone in Nottinghamshire a landowner let a bull out of a field to scatter a Wesleyan open-air gathering; at Shrigley near Macclesfield the local squire ran a large mastiff through a Wesleyan service; and in Lincoln when William Clowes tried to introduce Primitive Methodism into the city, opponents chased a goat through his meeting... in 1817 when a Wesleyan local preacher and landowner, William Lockwood, tried to preach in Newark market-place, the vicar ordered the town's chief fireman...to drench the preacher with water (pp153-4).

Intimidation of local preachers could take forms as diverse as drawn swords, rotten eggs or imprisonment with hard labour, but Watts shows such opposition to have been counterproductive, in some cases increasing general sympathy for the subjects of persecution.

There is a very informative section on preaching and praise in the Nonconformist community, dealing with styles of preaching and the progress of hymnody. We learn that the decision to introduce organs (commonly regarded as 'adjuncts of popery') in churches unloosed controversy as vicious as that attending the introduction of congregational hymn singing in an earlier generation and the introduction of 'modern' worship songs in our own time (pp185-186).

The 'psychology of conversion' is examined. There is much of interest: for example the statistics indicate that conversions were most long-lasting when there was prior religious background, and indicate that the most common age

of conversion was between fourteen and twenty-six. The growth of the Evangelical Nonconformists (the Independents, Baptists, and Methodists) is seen to be a result of their clear belief in eternal punishment and eternal life. The decline of the 'liberal' Nonconformists (the Quakers and Unitarians) was in proportion to their abandonment of this and any other firm belief in the supernatural elements of Christianity. This reviewer found the work weakest when attempting to explain conversion in purely human terms (for example 'these figures strongly suggest a connection between conversion and the arousal of sexual feelings at puberty' p57). But there is surely truth in the argument that in an age of low life expectancy the reminder of death in the mining accidents, cholera epidemics, and so forth made the Evangelical message of salvation particularly relevant and attractive. His discussion of conversion statistics is helpful in as much as he also takes into account drop-out statistics: then as now large numbers of sudden conversions could be followed by large scale backsliding (cf p647).

There are a number of commonly repeated opinions concerning Nonconformity during this period, and this work is particularly helpful in using hard evidence to critique these views. We highlight six such discussions.

Critiques of popular interpretations of Nonconformity.

1. 'Nonconformity was a bourgeois movement.'

As far back as 1844, Engels wrote that 'the workers have no religion and do not go to church' (p303). Since then, the myth that Nonconformity was essentially 'bourgeois' and made little impact on the working class has been repeated by successive writers, with little statistical evidence to support it. Watts superintended the examination of Nonconformist birth and baptismal registers housed in the Public Record Office for every county in England and Wales, for the period 1790-1837. County record office registers were examined for the post-1837 period. The statistics show that the majority of chapel goers were drawn from the working class, in both rural and urban areas.

2. 'Calvinism led to capitalism.'

The 'Weber' thesis expounded in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* linked Calvinism and Methodism with business success. Watts subjects this thesis to vigorous scrutiny, and finds that it needs many qualifications. It is true that conversion and membership of a Nonconformist church:

...both produced a conscientious attitude towards work and curtailed opportunities to waste one's time and substance on frivolous pursuits, and so created a situation in which hard work and savings could result in modest prosperity

(p333)... there was, though, a vast difference between gaining modest prosperity and respectability and achieving the entrepreneurial success that would make one's name and one's products familiar household names... (p335).

Watts finds that Weber's insistence on Calvinism as the driving force for capitalist development is too simplistic. He documents the far greater business success of the Quakers and Unitarians, who rejected Calvinism, than the Congregationalists and Particular Baptists who embraced it. Watts concludes:

...what distinguished the Quakers and the Unitarians on the one hand from the Baptists, Congregationalists, and Methodists on the other was their lack of Evangelical purpose. The same factors which explain the failure of the Quakers and the Unitarians to expand their numbers explain their success in making money. For Evangelical Nonconformists, even for those engaged in business, the chief end of their endeavours was not worldly prosperity, it was the saving of souls. They looked upon their fellow men first and foremost not as potential customers but as potential converts, not primarily as men whose desires required satisfaction in this life, but as men whose souls needed saving after death... (pp341-2).

Watts gives examples to demonstrate that Quakers and Unitarians (such as John Marshall and Samuel Courtauld) who succeeded in business possessed 'intelligence, drive, initiative, energy, imagination, and a single-mindedness of purpose' (p346). But these qualities were equally possessed by missionaries such as William Carey and Thomas Coke, and evangelists such as Hugh Bourne:

What distinguished Carey and Coke and Bourne from Courtauld and Marshall were not their abilities but their motives. The former were motivated by their passion to save the souls of their fellow men from eternal death; the latter were motivated by their desire to achieve for their families a comfortable life. The hearts and minds of the Quakers and Unitarians were concentrated on this world; the eyes of the Evangelicals were fixed on heaven (p.346).

3. 'Nonconformity saved England from revolution.'

Another widely repeated thesis is that of Halevy, who argued that Evangelical religion, particularly Methodism, protected England from revolution. The Nonconformists produced a spirit of respect for the social order, and a general ethical conformity, which prevented violent unrest at a time when revolutionary upheaval spread over the rest of Europe. Here, Watts gives evidence to support this thesis. Evangelical Nonconformity in the first half of the nineteenth century 'did not prevent political upheaval, radical protest, or growing class conflict; but it did guarantee that most of that protest and conflict would be contained within constitutional limits, accompanied by a minimum

of violence, and expressed for much of the time in the language of the Bible' (p377).

4. 'Nonconformist Sunday schools were an instrument of social control.'

E P Thompson, in his influential *The Making of the English Working Class* (1968) was scathing in his criticism of Sunday schools, seeing them as an instrument of indoctrination to force acceptance of the factory system. Watts offers a sober discussion of the Sunday school movement, and argues:

The ability to read, the distinction between right and wrong, the virtues of probity, thrift and sobriety, which were emphasised by the Sunday school and temperance movements alike, were indeed values cherished by a substantial section of the Victorian middle class, but that does not make them specifically 'bourgeois' values. They were values which were embraced with even greater enthusiasm by enormous numbers of the nineteenth-century working class (p303).

Such values, embraced by those who were converted, conferred 'respectability'. This in practice meant the distinction between:

...the decent family from the disreputable family, the responsible father from the drunken father, the cared for children from the neglected children. And just because working-class families knew at first hand, even better than did middle-class families, the consequences of losing that respectability, they sought to have their children educated in the values taught by the Sunday schools. The assumption that such values were merely bourgeois values is destroyed by an analysis of the social structure of Nonconformity in the first half of the nineteenth century (p303).

Thus, Nonconformity was a genuinely working-class as well as a middle-class movement, and had a tremendously positive social impact on those involved.

5. 'Nonconformists failed to support social reform.'

Another controversy which is discussed in a clear and responsible manner is the accusation that humane efforts at factory reform (such as efforts to limit child labour) were supported by Evangelical Anglicans but often opposed by hard-headed Nonconformist industrialists. Yes, many prominent Unitarian and Quaker manufacturers were adamant in opposition to factory reform. But there were dissenters who supported reform; and there were sterling efforts by Nonconformist industrialists to ameliorate conditions for their workers.

However there is enough evidence brought forward to suggest that there is at least some truth behind the uncomfortable statement: 'The failure of the majority of Nonconformist leaders to support the working class on issues such as factory reform and the poor law constitutes the most glaring failure of

compassion in the whole history of Dissent' (p487). In 1833 Parliament legislated a 45 hour working week for Negroes in the West Indies, but in 1836 it nearly increased the hours for 12 year olds in Britain from 48 a week to 69 a week. 'What a pity, that these 35,000 factory children happened to be white instead of black,' commented the reformer John Fielden (p510). Watts argues that the great strength of Evangelical Nonconformity 'was that it offered consolation, companionship, and ultimately eternal salvation to a working class threatened by disease, natural disaster, and early death' (p511). But conversely, a weakness of orthodox Dissent was its tendency to pietism, and the inability to engage convincingly with the great issues opened up by the industrial revolution.

6. 'Philanthropy was paternalistic and self-serving.'

More positively, Watts gives a wealth of information concerning the philanthropic enterprises of nineteenth-century Nonconformists. He demolishes the argument of E P Thompson and his followers that religion was used as a weapon to keep the workforce under control. He does however supply evidence to suggest that Nonconformity had a moderating influence on trade unionism. He then produces ample evidence to show that the majority of Nonconformist employers were caring and fair, gives many examples of philanthropy, and concludes: 'Philanthropy revealed Nonconformity at its best' (p634). 'The elderly, the sick, the orphaned, the imprisoned, were all beneficiaries of Dissenting philanthropy...' (p638). Some have objected that the nineteenth-century philanthropists were dealing with the symptoms of poverty, not its underlying causes. This is unfair. As Prochaska wrote: 'Unlike social theorists who had rarely held the hand of a dying child in a hovel, philanthropists had...to deal with conditions as they were, not as they might be' (p643).

Watts concludes that Nonconformity brought to multitudes a 'sense of freedom, joy, and often material improvement' (p647). He quotes observers who maintained that Evangelical Nonconformity had a transforming effect on whole communities (pp649-651), and finds it indisputable that the expansion of Evangelical Nonconformity 'had a pacifying and civilizing influence on the working class' (p651). It made a section of the working class respectable, and promoted social harmony, which in practice meant happier lives.

There is much here that is thought-provoking and even inspiring. We would not endorse all of Watts' arguments but we stand in his debt for this immense work which can only advance our understanding of Nonconformity during this vital period.

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