

REFORMATION TODAY



NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1997

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Dr Joel Beeke

A feast day not to be missed!

Dr Joel Beeke is due to speak at a one day conference in Leeds, UK on Thursday 11th December 1997. Dr Beeke is pastor of the Heritage Netherlands Reformed Congregation in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

At 10.30 a.m. he is to address the subject *The Heart of Puritanism – how to find inspiration for practical godliness today*. After lunch the theme is *Our Puritan Legacy – how to benefit from Puritan literature*. Copies of every Puritan book reprinted in the second half of this century, and currently available, will be on display at bargain prices.

Details: Brian Beevers, 18 Welburn Avenue, Leeds LS16 5HJ. Tel 0113 275 5154.

The Westminster Conference, London

This year the Conference is due to take place on 9th and 10th December. The programme is as follows:

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| Day 1 | 1. Stephen Clark: <i>Conversion Experiences among the Puritans</i> |
| | 2. Joel Beeke: <i>Anthony Burgess on Assurance</i> |
| | 3. Gary Brady: <i>Local Church Life in England before 1662</i> |
| Day 2 | 1. Phil Arthur: <i>The Puritan Family</i> |
| | 2. Mark Johnson: 'Honour the King': <i>Puritan and Reformed Views</i> |
| | 3. Tony Lambert: <i>Wang Mingdao: A Christian in Conflict with the State</i> |

The secretary for the Conference is Pastor John Harris, 8 Back Knowl Road, Mirfield, W Yorkshire WF14 9SA.

Carey Ministers' Conference 7th - 9th January 1998

The principal speakers are Dr Gaius Davies, Martin Holdt of South Africa and John Campbell of Brisbane, Australia.

The opening session: Geoff Thomas on *George Whitefield the preacher*.

Details: John Rubens, 22 Leith Road, Darlington, Co Durham DL3 8BQ

Front Cover: *Opening service of the new Bridge Chapel Centre, Garston (see News p. 30). Pastor Bill Bygroves inviting some special guests to receive copies of the Word of God from friends who are members of the Thursday Club for adults with learning difficulties.*

Editorial

The priority of expository preaching

This issue is devoted mostly to the subject of preaching, a subject of interest to us all. If we are not involved in the work of expository preaching we are at the receiving end of listening. It is in the best interest of us all that preaching fulfils the characteristics outlined in the article 'The Puritans and Expository Preaching'.

There are many pressures which work to remove preaching from its primary position. One is the radicalism of the charismatic movement with its emphasis on the direct operations of the Spirit. Yet no example can be cited in that movement of a powerful preacher who receives his messages direct from heaven. The outcome when preachers imagine that they are directly inspired is either ranting or the repetition of dramatic stories of miracles and wonders, and that is not preaching. One of the features of Rodney Howard-Browne, the high-powered Toronto Blessing proponent, is that he is a rambler not a preacher. He often resorts to a diatribe on money and giving, but that is not preaching. The Scriptures unite the reality of hard work with powerful expository preaching.

The necessity of expository preaching shows itself most clearly when the question of authority is raised. By whose authority do preachers preach? Whose word do they bring? If the preacher brings his own word then it is just his opinion. But if the preacher brings the Word of God those who hear it are answerable to the God from whom that Word comes. Accordingly if preachers wish to preach with divine authority they must proclaim the message of Scripture. The Bible provides its own definitive interpretation of God's acts in history. Thus it is permanently normative. To proclaim the very Word of God requires commitment to the unique authority of the Bible and also to prayer for its relevance to those to whom it is proclaimed.¹

The 'Perfect Dunghill' Debate

This debate was sparked off by an article by William R Estep, 'Calvinizing Southern Baptists' which appeared in the March 26, 1997 issue of the *Texas Baptist Standard*. The implications are drawn out in the article so named. We are grateful to the contributors for their clarity. Details from: *The Founders Journal* PO Box 150931, Cape Coral, FL 33915, USA.

e-mail 74513.2116@compuserve

Outline of *The Founders Journal* on the web site at

<http://wwwFOUNDERS.org>

A theological renewal began in the late 1950s. This included a rediscovery of the doctrines of grace. The continuation of this renewal is seen in the controversy over Calvinism in the Southern Baptist Convention.

As in previous reformational movements there are radical reactions. During the 16th-century Reformation many Anabaptists suffered from ignorance and veered into charismatic fanaticism and political anarchy culminating in the madness and massacre of Münster. During the tumultuous years from the 1630s to the 1650s wild aberrations developed around English Puritanism. For instance in 1637 the Star Chamber sentenced three men Burton, Prynne and Bastwick, to stand in the pillory, have their ears lopped off and to pay the then impossible fine of £5000 and if that were not enough to suffer perpetual imprisonment! All this for opposition to the notorious Archbishop Laud. The effect was to swing some from the Church of England into radical separatism. One, Lilburne became so extreme that he declared that 'whoever listens to sermons preached by ministers appointed by the bishops listens to the pope, and thus to the devil'.² This is radicalism with a vengeance, a radicalism so extreme in its second degree separatism that it would wipe out the legacies of Puritan literature since nearly all of the Puritans were ordained Church of England ministers.

The writers responding in *The Founders Journal* to Prof Estep's wild reaction to the doctrines of grace have followed the example of the Puritans in the way they commend the truth in love (Eph 4:15).

References

- 1 Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text, Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature*, IVP, 1988, page 12ff.
- 2 Michael Watts, *The Dissenters, from the Reformation to the French Revolution*, OUP, 1985, page 66ff.

The History of Expository Preaching

Editor

‘As the twentieth century sets and a new millennium dawns, we must reclaim the science and art of expository preaching for the coming generation. No one said it would be easy. It is quite the opposite. No other method of preaching requires so much work. At the same time, no other method rewards so richly.’¹ So writes Richard Mayhue. Systematic expository preaching feeds the flock but also has a tremendous advantage for the preacher. It builds him up and it also means that he can get down to a theme in depth and continuity. He is built up in knowledge. At the same time he is freed from the feverish search of looking for different subjects every week.

What is Expository Preaching?

In contrast to topical preaching, which is to take any subject or topic and open it up in the light of Scripture, systematic or progressive expository preaching concentrates on a text or paragraph of Scripture, analyses what it says, draws out the doctrine or teaching, and makes a practical application.

The Puritans exemplified this method. They would take a book of Scripture and proceed to expound it verse by verse. There are innumerable examples of this. For instance Thomas Manton (1620-1677) began his ministry at a relatively young age. His expositions have been published in 22 volumes. He preached shorter and longer series. His works include a series on the Lord’s prayer, Christ’s temptation, a series on Isaiah 53, 2 Thessalonians 2, James and Jude,² a verse by verse sermon on Psalm 119 (in three volumes!), John 17, Matthew 25, sections of Romans, Hebrews 11, Ephesians 5:1-27 and a number of other short series.

Thomas Manton possessed a similar ability to that of Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones which was to extract truth out of the text and then bring to it the confirmatory passages from Scripture so as to make a powerful impact. This is a rare gift. It is essential for a preacher to assess his own capacities. He must beware of wearying his hearers with too much detail. He must aim at clarity and avoid complexity, as one lady said of her minister, ‘My pastor is so deep, I do not understand it!’ Alun McNabb at the Banner of Truth Ministers’ Conference at

Leicester this year in his own inimitable way warned of the danger of being heavy in the pulpit. He referred to some who put 25 years on their looks, 25 years on their voice, and 25 minutes on the length of their sermon!

When did Expository Preaching Begin?

We may well ask when did expository preaching begin? James F Stitzinger in a chapter on the History of Expository Preaching suggests that the style of Scripture generally is expository and makes this helpful comment, 'All preaching must be expository preaching if it is to conform to the pattern of Scripture.'³ The elements of expository preaching he suggests are seen in the preaching of Moses (Deut 31-33). He points to our Lord's Sermon on the Mount Matthew 5-7, and refers to our Lord as 'both the model of preaching and the message of what is preached'.

Primitive Christianity to the 16th-century Reformation

The rapid deterioration of primitive Christianity (100-450) has been well documented. The lack of expository preaching in the post-apostolic age was a principal reason for the weakening of the Christian Church. A Church poorly taught is a vulnerable Church. The first four hundred years produced many preachers but few true Bible expositors. Describing the fourth century (325-460), Stitzinger points to six in particular, Basil, Gregory of Nazianzen, Gregory of Nyssa, Augustine, John Chrysostom and Ambrose who engaged in serious Bible study. In addition to his theological writings Augustine produced over six hundred sermons. Some of these could be described as exegetical (bringing out the meaning of the text) but his interpretations were usually allegorical and imaginative, as was true of others just mentioned.

Stitzinger claims that the notable and significant exception in this early period was John Chrysostom (347-407). Chrysostom rejected the allegorical approach. The allegorical method is to attach meanings to the narratives, to the text of Scripture or to parables which are arbitrary, that is they are not there and they are not intended, even though the things attached may be true in and of themselves. An example of this method for instance is the parable of the Good Samaritan who gave two pence to the proprietor of the hotel where he left the poor man who had been the victim of robbery and assault. Why two pence? Well, the allegorical method will allow all kinds of inventive and imaginative



David and Barbara Ellis at the Carey Family Conference (see p.20)

ideas to be imported so we could say the two pence stands for baptism and the Lord's Supper. That is ridiculous but then the allegorical method is absurd.

Well did J C Ryle in commenting on Matthew 4:17 assert, 'The brightest days of the Church have been those when preaching has been honoured. The darkest days of the Church have been those when it has been lightly esteemed.' The medieval period, 476-1500, was impoverished as far as expositors of Scripture are concerned. While the period produced some famous preachers, such as Peter the Hermit, Bernard of Clairvaux, and Thomas Aquinas, none handled the text in an expository fashion. Faint hints of Bible exposition have been detected among independent groups such as the Paulicians, Waldenses and Albigenses, despite the fact that these groups are commonly dismissed as heretics.⁴

As this period drew to a close several pre-Reformation leaders rekindled the fire of expository preaching. Among these were John Wycliff (1330-1384), John Huss (1373-1415) and Girolamo Savonarola (1452-1498).

The 16th-century Reformation

The coming of the Reformation was like the sun rising after a long dark night.

Over twelve years Martin Luther expounded the Psalms, Romans, Galatians and the letter to the Hebrews. Luther was essentially a powerful preacher of the Word not only to his students (he was seminary professor all his career) but to ordinary people.

The most significant expositor of the Scriptures in the Reformation era was John Calvin (1509-1564). Preaching the Word provided a spiritual power base and foundation for all of Calvin's work as a pastor, reformer and writer. There are small gaps in the records but in spite of that it is possible to make a fairly accurate estimate of the number of times he preached in Geneva and we have records of all the books on which he preached series of sermons. Between 1549 and 1564 he preached 1,900 sermons from the Old Testament and 588 sermons from the New Testament. Calvin's sermons are to be distinguished from his lectures. Included in series of sermons on books of the Bible are 123 on Genesis, 200 on Deuteronomy, 159 on Job, 343 on Isaiah, 174 on Ezekiel, 65 on Hosea and in the New Testament 189 on Acts, 110 on 1 Corinthians, 66 on 2 Corinthians, 43 on Galatians, 48 on Ephesians and 55 on 1 Timothy.⁵

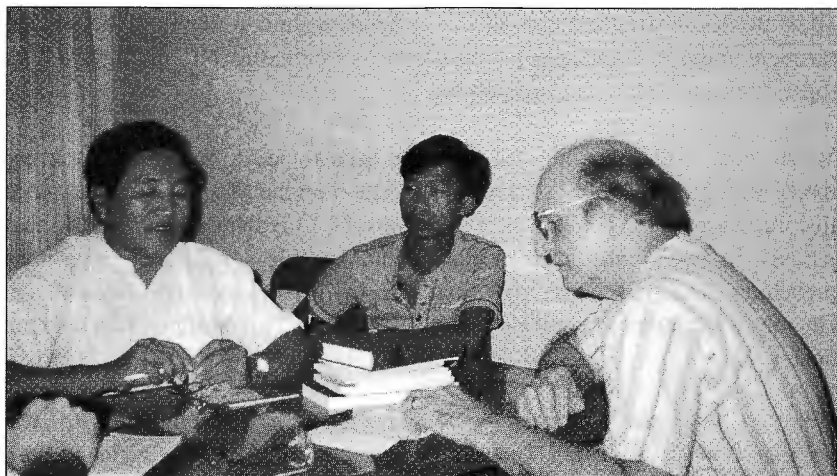
The English Puritans

Most of the English Puritans followed the systematic progressive approach of preaching through books of the Bible. This is not to say that they did not preach topical sermons as occasion required. They often addressed specific subjects, especially practical topics, as we see in the famous Cripplegate Sermons.⁷

Some Puritans were able to take a few verses and in elastic fashion open them out to describe the whole Christian life, and that without being artificial. An example of this is William Gurnall's treatise on *The Complete Armour of God*. In 1,176 pages, nine verses (Eph 6:10-18), are opened up: an entire body of doctrinal and practical divinity in the context of spiritual warfare. This has been reworked in modern style, beautifully structured, and republished in three paperbacks by the Banner of Truth. This is biblical exposition at its very best. There is action, teaching, colour and application.

From 1700 to 1997

It would seem that most well-known preachers during this period did not follow the systematic way of going through books of the Bible in their



Pastor Ngung Tlung (see p. 29) on the left with Pastor Jay Baker in Mandalay

preaching. The saying is attributed to William Jay, 'The best sermon is that which does the hearer the most good.' It cannot be emphasised enough that the preacher who follows this method must be versatile and have the intellect, personality and the library resources suitable for the work. If the people become bored they might become sullen and resentful.

The advantage with the 'higgledy-piggledy' method is that it has the element of surprise. But the systematic expositor should be able to present each new exposition with enough verve and imagination to make it gripping. It is a happy situation when the congregation is so enjoying a series that they look forward eagerly to the next instalment.

In our century Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1900-1981) and William Still (1911-1997) are the best known expositors who used the systematic method, a method which suits a long ministry. William Still was minister of Gilcomston South (Church of Scotland) for 52 years. It should be remembered that Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones was in the ministry for about 20 years before he used the systematic method. He was minister of Westminster Chapel from 1939 to 1969. It should be noted that the 13 year series on Romans took the form of lectures on Friday evenings.

Most of the preachers born out of the Reformed theological renewal from

about the 1960s use the systematic expository method, not only in the UK but throughout the world. Happily most do this not inflexibly but mixing this with topical sermons as deemed appropriate.

Where does a minister begin if he is not accustomed to preaching consecutively through books of Scripture? The Serrnon on the Mount is an ideal place to commence a series of expository sermons. Dr Lloyd-Jones' sermons on that passage in two volumes are a classic and provide a model of expository preaching. A feature of his expositions is his ability to keep to the main theme. He does not attempt too much substance which can hinder rather than help the hearers.

When we have read an outstanding commentary we must not think that there is nothing more to be said. The Scriptures are inexhaustible. For instance John Blanchard in thirteen expositions, *The Beatitudes for Today*, shows just how relevant is this section of the Word of God today.⁶ It is important that the preacher wrestle with the passage and the text himself with whatever linguistic abilities and help he can muster and then resort to commentaries. The power of the Word is uppermost and commentaries and expositions must be used to reinforce that. Sadly in many countries it is difficult to obtain one commentary on a passage let alone several.

A short book like Jonah is an option for one beginning to expound systematically. It is wise not to announce that he is embarking on a series. He can preach from the first chapter and the next week continue with chapter two and then if all is well complete the book. Short books which lend themselves to preaching paragraph by paragraph are James and 1 John.

The responsibility to expound the whole counsel of God in depth will always exercise preachers. They need all the inspiration they can get from the example and wisdom of others and the spiritual and practical support of the people they lead.

References

- 1 Richard L. Mayhue, p.20, in John MacArthur, Jr, ed. *Rediscovering Expository Preaching*, Word Publishing, 1992. This 390 page volume consists of 19 chapters written by tutors of The Master's Seminary faculty.
- 2 Both James and Jude by Manton have been republished by the Banner of Truth Trust.
- 3 In MacArthur, *op cit*, page 42.
- 4 *ibid* page 46.
- 5 Wulfert de Greef, *The Writings of John Calvin*, Baker Book House, 1989.
- 6 John Blanchard, *The Beatitudes for Today*, Day One Publications, 263 pages, 1996.
- 7 Puritan Sermons, being *The Morning Exercises*, first published in 1661, republished in six volumes by Richard Owen Roberts, 1981.

Henry Jessey the Puritan (1601-1663)

Editor



Henry Jessey

In his *History of the Puritans*, volume 3, page 140, Daniel Neal describes Mr Henry Jessey as 'an eminent divine among the Puritans'.

Henry Jessey was born in 1601 near Cleveland, Yorkshire, where his father was minister. At seventeen years of age he was sent to St John's College, Cambridge. When his father died in 1623 he was left with only three pence a day to live on. While at university he showed mastery in the biblical languages and later, with friends, set himself to translate the whole Bible. This enterprise though

almost completed did not result in publication. It was said of Jessey that the original languages of the Old and New Testament were as familiar to him as his mother tongue. After leaving Cambridge he worked as a chaplain in an aristocratic home. He was ordained in 1627. In 1633 he took the living of Aughton in Yorkshire. Soon he was in trouble. His Puritan convictions caused him to take down a crucifix and he refused to follow the prescribed order of service. He was dismissed and thereafter received into the home of Sir Matthew Bointon in Yorkshire from where he preached frequently in two parishes.

In 1635 Jessey was invited to be pastor of the congregation formed in 1616 by Henry Jacob.¹ He continued in this position until his decease. A number in the congregation had accepted believers' baptism and this stirred Jessey to study the subject. Neal says, 'After great deliberation, many prayers and frequent conferences with pious and learned friends, he altered his sentiments, first concerning the mode, and then the subjects, of baptism. But he maintained the same temper of friendship and charity towards other Christians, not only as to conversation, but church-communion. When he visited churches in the north and west of England, he laboured to promote the spirit of love and union among them and, was a principal person in setting up and maintaining, for some time, a meeting of some eminent men of each denomination in London.'

In June 1645 he was baptised by Hanserd Knollys. In London in addition to his own pastorate he ministered regularly at St George's Church, Southwark, and elsewhere during the week.

He deliberately chose to be single so that he could devote his life to serving others. Perhaps his experience of extreme poverty as a student was partly responsible for his sympathy for and amazing generosity to the

poor. Thirty poor families received their support from him and so remarkable was his passion to help the needy that he collected £300 (a large sum in those days) for Jews in desperate need in Jerusalem. With this gift he sent letters of concern. Later he wrote a treatise proving that Jesus is the true Messiah. This was prepared in Hebrew for distribution among Jews wherever they may be found.

Upon the Restoration he was ejected from his position at St George's. He was silenced in his ministry and committed to prison. About six months later he died full of peace and joy. Neal reports that several thousand from many different persuasions attended his funeral.

Reference

- 1 The church in London was known as the Jacob – Lathrop – Jessey church, so-called because of the names of the first three pastors. Due to persecution, Henry Jacob (1565-1624) left England for Virginia in 1622 but died two years later. John Lathrop (1584-1653) left for America in 1634. The story is outlined in *Kiffin, Knollys and Keach*, a 125 page *Carey Publications* title available from *Evangelical Press* at their new address, Grange Close, Faverdale North Industrial Estate, Darlington DL3 0PH, UK. Hanserd Knollys (1599-1691), like Henry Jessey, was ordained in the Church of England but became what we would today term a Reformed Baptist. He was active throughout his long life and signed both *The 1646 First London Confession of Faith* and *The 1689 Second London Confession of Faith*. For details of Henry Jessey see Crosby's *History of the Baptists*, vol 1, pp 307-321.

Counselling the Flock through Preaching

By Errol Wagner, formerly pastor of Durban North Baptist Church, who is now pastor of the George Baptist Church, Eastern Cape, South Africa.

'The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour' (Luke 4:18-19).

The subject of this article immediately raises the question whether it is possible to counsel the flock through preaching. Are we not dealing with two different and distinct pastoral functions?

Preaching is general, directive, and to some extent impersonal while counselling is specific, non-directive, and personal. It is argued that preaching and counselling should be kept separate because it is impossible to counsel people through the preached Word. Personal problems are too complex to deal with in preaching.



Pastor Errol Wagner

Since the 1960s, the evangelical sector of the Church has moved to integrate the findings of the psychological sciences in the training of ministers. This has led to a situation where more and more pastors believe that specialist training in counselling is needed if they are going to deal effectively with people's personal problems.

It is in this context that many pastors have lost confidence in the effectiveness of preaching. Although many would not care to admit this, our practice indicates that preaching is largely regarded as a means of offering salvation to the unsaved and of dealing with so-called spiritual problems. Deep personal problems of living are the domain of specialist, extensive counselling. This has resulted in a dichotomy between preaching and counselling and in reality the former has been relegated to a secondary position in our pastoral care.

This paper will begin with a description of the relationship between preaching and counselling in the tradition of the Church. We shall then consider how this relationship changed, its effects, and the reasons for such change. From this exercise, we shall submit the main arguments for the thesis that, whilst there is a place for personal counselling, preaching is the most effective, efficient, and biblical means of counselling the flock. In conclusion, we shall briefly consider some examples of how to counsel through preaching.

1. The traditional understanding of the relationship between preaching and counselling

The question of the relationship between preaching and counselling has been one which has only recently become a point of debate in the Church.

Traditionally, it was accepted that the preacher was the same person who pastored the people.¹ The minister not only preached to the congregation collectively but he also counselled the individual. Both functions complemented each other. This tradition could be traced back to the early Church. Paul, for example, understood his ministry as preaching the gospel² and also caring for the Church like a mother³ or a father, encouraging and comforting his children.⁴ Similarly, Peter emphasises that it is through the preaching of the imperishable, living, and enduring Word of God that the believer has been born again. Nevertheless, the elder⁵ must shepherd God's flock and care for them.⁶

This tradition continued in the Church even after the apostles. Fred Craddock points out that a reading of Augustine's sermons 'reveals clearly that they were all pastoral in perspective [and] preached with a mind to nourish, guard, comfort, inform, warn, encourage, heal, or renew the flock of God'.⁷ We see the same emphasis later in the Church.

Charles Bridges⁸ writing in 1849 states: Let us not think, that all our work is done in the study and in the pulpit. Preaching derives much of its power from connexion with the pastoral work; and its too frequent disjoining from it is a main cause of our inefficiency. The Pastor and Preacher combine to form the completeness of the sacred office. He continues this point and claims that 'pastoral work is the personal application of the pulpit ministry to the proper individualities of our people'.⁹ William Shedd (1867) makes a similar point and argues that the Christian minister

'is not only a preacher, whose function it is to impart public instruction before an audience, but he is also a pastor, whose office it is to give private and personal advice and to make his influence felt in the social and domestic life of the congregation'.¹⁰

2. A change in the relationship between preaching and counselling

The twentieth century brought a change in this relationship between preaching and counselling.¹¹ The ground was laid by Harry Emerson Fosdick, pastor of Riverside Church, New York City from 1926 to 1946. He believed that a sermon should begin with the people and their problems.¹² He wrote that 'we need more sermons that try to face people's real problems with them, meet their difficulties, answer their questions, confirm their noblest faith and interpret their experiences in sympathetic, wise and understanding cooperation'.¹³ Craddock interpreted this style as representing a shift from expository to life situation preaching¹⁴ and regarded Fosdick's preaching as group counselling.¹⁵

By the 1960s people were questioning whether preaching was really necessary and the tide of preaching began to ebb.¹⁶ Indicative of this shift was the fact that more and more seminaries no longer prescribed preaching and related subjects as necessary for the ministry. As a result, an increasing number of ministerial students opted for counselling as the most effective way of helping people.¹⁷ Stott remarks that 'with the contemporary loss of confidence in preaching there has been an increase in confidence in counselling'.¹⁸

What caused this shift from preaching to counselling in the Church? Firstly, the effects of biblical criticism undermined confidence in the authority of the Bible. Secondly, toward the end of the nineteenth century, through the influence of Sigmund Freud, who was regarded as the father of modern psychiatry, new and fresh insights in understanding human behaviour were discovered. With these came a growing awareness that many of the personal problems a minister faced in his work are of a psychological nature. Consequently, it was felt that for ministers to help people they would need specialist training in psychology and counselling. In the more liberal churches, where biblical criticism was accepted, counselling provided an attractive alternative for those who questioned the authority of the Bible. Even among evangelicals who question the findings of biblical criticism, there has been a substantial move toward

exposing pastors to the psychological sciences and to modern counselling methodology over the past two decades. Another result has been that specialist counselling came to be regarded as the most effective way of helping people with personal problems. Thirdly, some argued that the particular needs of modern man required a more personal approach than preaching. Although disagreeing with this view, Martyn Lloyd-Jones summarises its contention: 'The argument has been that, owing to the new stresses and strains and difficulties in living life in the modern world, people need much more personal attention, you have got to get to know their particular difficulties, and you must deal with these in private.'¹⁹

Finally, the emergence of a philosophy of relativism militated against absolutes and particularly against any form of authority. Increasingly, preachers felt uncomfortable and embarrassed with the authoritarian declaration, 'Thus saith the Lord.' Thus today preaching is considered a less effective means not only of helping people but of communicating the gospel. Haddon Robinson comments on the current situation: 'The word is out in some circles that preaching should be abandoned. The moving finger has passed it by and now points to other methods and ministries that are more 'effective' and in tune with the times.'²⁰ This is not only true of the more liberal churches, but also of the so-called evangelical churches. John Armstrong demonstrates that this move away from preaching to counselling is part of a larger movement: 'Dialogues, films, talk-ins, drama, mime, up-tempo music and clever new styles of speaking to the mind of modern man have all vied for first place in the attention of God's people in public worship... The result is that at best, most churches give their congregation one short sermon weekly.'²¹

We would be less than honest if we preachers did not admit that there are times when we question the effectiveness of preaching. Who would not feel discouraged after spending hours in the study in preparation and giving of ourselves in proclamation, when we see minimal change in our congregations? The results always seem less than what we hoped for. It is, therefore, not surprising that even among many dedicated pastors there has been a tendency to put more confidence in counselling.

The question which naturally arises is whether there is still a place for preaching. Or has preaching had its day? Is preaching an anachronism and unable to deal with the personal problems of modern people? Is it not true that the stress and challenges in society today require a more personal, direct, and specific approach of counselling?

3. Counselling or preaching?

The view proposed in this article is that preaching must be central to the work of the pastor. This does not mean, however, that counselling does not have a place. What then is the relationship between preaching and counselling?

William Willimon states adamantly: 'Time and again I have seen preachers fail to be heard in their preaching because they have failed to do the necessary pastoral care that would have provided the proper context for congregational hearing.'²² Henri Nouwen in his book *Creative Ministry* says that preaching needs to reflect the insights the pastor gains from involvement in the lives of the people in the church.²³

Another point of contact between preaching and counselling is that the sermon opens the door for counselling. It is through preaching that people are encouraged to come to the preacher with their problems. The two functions complement each other as Willimon notes: 'The person who enters the pulpit to proclaim the Word on Sunday is also the person who has entered the homes, the lives, the hopes and fears, of his or her parishioners. Monday through Saturday the pastor is not only a preacher, he or she is also a counsellor, one who guides, sustains, reconciles, and heals the people of God as they go about the task of living the faith.'²⁴

Counselling also provides the preacher with insights into the kinds of problems he should address in his preaching. Although preaching and counselling should not be separated, there are a number of influential church leaders who argue that both are not on the same level and that preaching is primary and must not be replaced with counselling.

Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones consistently stressed the importance of preaching as opposed to counselling. He argued that all true biblical preaching would canvass personal problems and stated from personal experience: 'The preaching of the gospel from the pulpit, applied by the Holy Spirit to the individuals who are listening, has been the means of dealing with personal problems of which I as the preacher knew nothing until people came to me at the end of the service saying, "I want to thank you for that sermon because if you had known I was there and the exact nature of my problem, you could not have answered my various questions more perfectly."' ²⁵

On the other hand, Lloyd-Jones saw merit in counselling but never at the

expense of preaching, for 'personal counselling and all other activities are meant to supplement the preaching, not to supplant it: they are the 'carrying on', 'follow up' work but must never be thought of as the primary work.'²⁶ There are several reasons why preaching must continue to hold a central place in the pastoral function. We have the biblical example of Jesus who was involved in healing, personal counselling, caring, yet the emphasis of his ministry was on preaching and teaching.²⁷ He sent out his disciples to teach and preach.²⁸ After the resurrection it is clear that preaching was central to the early Church.²⁹

Paul's charge to Timothy was that he must 'preach the word: be prepared in season and out of season, correct, rebuke and encourage - with great patience and careful instruction'.³⁰ Willimon maintains that 'although preaching is not the only way the Church testifies to what she has seen and heard, it has always been the major way she has testified'.³¹ Theologically, the Scriptures set out reasons why preaching must remain central to pastoral functions. All personal problems are in reality problems of relationships occasioned by the fall of humankind.³² Because humanity's relationship with God was distorted this led to a disintegration in the relationship between person and person, manifested in sins like murder, jealousy, coveting, stealing, adultery and lying. The way men and women related to themselves was also affected and resulted in lost identity, anxiety, fear, anger, depression, and guilt.³³ According to William Kirwan: Through the fall Adam tainted the destiny of all who would follow him. An important result of the fall is mental and emotional suffering, formally labelled psycho-pathology.³⁴

Counselling and preaching are concerned with the restoration of these relationships. Ultimately, these relationships can only 'be restored for each of us through Christ, whose death and resurrection bring a message of healing'.³⁵ Paul calls this the message of reconciliation,³⁶ and according to Ralph Christensen, such a message is inextricably linked to God's Word.³⁷ This Word comes to us both corporately and individually: corporately primarily through public preaching and at times individually through counselling.

The sensitive preacher will not only know the text but he will know his people. He will know that there are members of his congregation who have come to the worship service with a sense of guilt, sorrow, anger, frustration, loneliness, depression, and despair. Some will be struggling with fierce temptations, and wrestling with shattered dreams. Others will be maimed by marriage problems, problems concerning sexuality,

feelings of inferiority, and pain. There will be those in attendance haunted by the problems of life, culture and human existence.

4. *Examples of pastoral preaching*

The best examples of preaching aimed at assisting people with their personal problems are probably found among the Puritan preachers. In this regard Lloyd-Jones points out: The Puritans are justly famous for their pastoral preaching. They would take up what they called 'cases of conscience' and deal with them in their sermons; and as they dealt with these problems they were solving the personal individual problems of those who were listening to them.³⁸

William Bridge's *A Lifting up for the Downcast*, is an excellent example of this. In thirteen sermons on Psalm 42 he deals with the problem of spiritual depression. His publisher described these sermons as 'the work of a true physician of souls'.³⁹ He continues: 'Bridge manifests great insight into the cause of the saints' discouragements such as great sins, weak grace, failure in duties, want of assurance, temptation, desertion and affliction. A correct diagnosis is more than half the cure but Bridge does not leave his readers there. He gives direction for applying the remedy.'⁴⁰

The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment by Jeremiah Burroughs is another fine example. In these sermons he struggles with the whole question of Christian contentment in a very practical way and lists twelve specific exercises that lead to inner contentment.⁴¹ Thomas Brooks deals with the condition of mental depression known as melancholy and describes it as 'a dark and dusky humour which disturbs both the soul and the body, and the cure of it belongs to the physician [rather] than the divine... [it] is a disease that works strange passions, strange imaginations and strange conclusions.'⁴²

These examples indicate that the Puritan preachers saw no distinction between preaching and counselling and masterfully counselled the flock through their sermons. It is significant that this was taking place more than three hundred years before the influence of the psychological sciences on the Church. Any preacher seeking to develop the counselling aspect of his preaching should study the Puritans.

Moving nearer to our time we have some of the best examples of preaching counselling the flock in the expository sermons of Martyn Lloyd-Jones. Peter Lewis remarks of this Welsh preacher: 'This constant application of Scripture truth to the lives of his hearers was a major and crucial element even of his most profound doctrinal teaching. Like the Puritan preachers in their own systematic pulpit teaching and preaching, he never finished a sermon without applying the doctrine to the hearts and lives of his hearers.'⁴³

Perhaps the classic example of Lloyd-Jones' ability to counsel his hearers is found in his exposition of Psalms 42 and 43 in *Spiritual Depression: Its Causes and Cure*. In this series of expositions he utilizes his diagnostic skill as a physician sensitively to identify the symptoms of the condition and the causes of depression. Lloyd-Jones considers the effect of temperament, physical ailments, tiredness, and overwork concluding that it is not possible to isolate the spiritual from the psychological and physical. In his expositions of Ephesians 6:10-13 entitled *The Christian Warfare*, he has a sermon entitled 'Physical, Psychological, Spiritual'. In this exposition Lloyd-Jones considers 'the wiles of the devil' as they are to be seen in the confusion he creates between the physical, the psychological and spiritual realms.⁴⁴ He emphasises the relevance of this exposition. This is a subject which is perhaps one of the most practical we can ever consider. This is a realm in which the activities of the devil are particularly frequent and most damaging. We are strange creatures, made up of body, mind and spirit; these are interrelated and react upon one another. Many of our troubles in life are due to this fact, and to one of these realms.⁴⁵

In the same series Lloyd-Jones considers practical issues of life under titles like 'Attacks upon Assurance', 'Discouragement', 'Worry and Anxiety', and 'Self'. In Ephesians chapters 5 and 6 his expositions explore the family and home. He deals with doubt and despair evoked by the apparent success of the godless as compared with the suffering of believers in Psalm 73. Finally, his expositions on Habakkuk define how a Christian can move from fear to faith amidst God's mysterious purposes in the world.

Lloyd-Jones always expounded Scripture with the personal needs of his listeners in mind. Preachers do well to read these expositions which reflect a mastery of both text and human nature. This Welsh doctor epitomises at best the art of counselling the flock through preaching.

5. Conclusion

It is submitted that the time is ripe for us to return to our roots as preachers and follow the traditional model of integrating preaching and counselling. Separating these two functions to accommodate the psychological sciences research is unnecessary. In reality the most effective and efficient means of counselling is through preaching. There is a dual need today: for preachers to rediscover the power of preaching to change the lives of people and to commit themselves afresh to the hard work of preaching, but preaching that covers the full counsel of God.

Notes

- 1 *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counselling*, s.v. 'Preaching'.
- 2 1Thess. 1:5; 2:9.
- 3 1Thess. 2:7.
- 4 1Thess. 2:11.
- 5 It is assumed here that the terms elder and pastor are synonymous.
- 6 1 Pet. 1:23-25; 5:2.
- 7 *Dictionary*, s.v. 'Preaching'.
- 8 Charles Bridges, *The Christian Ministry* (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1961), p.343.
- 9 *ibid*, p.344.
- 10 W G T Shedd, *Homiletics and Pastoral Theology* (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1965), p.280.
- 11 *Dictionary*, s.v. 'Preaching'.
- 12 Donald Capps, *Pastoral Counselling and Preaching: A Quest for an Integrated Ministry* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1980), p.14.
- 13 *ibid*
- 14 *Dictionary*, s.v. 'Preaching'.
- 15 Capps, *Pastoral Counselling*, p.14.
- 16 John R W Stott, *I Believe in Preaching* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1982), p.33.
- 17 *Dictionary*, s.v. 'Preaching'.
- 18 Stott, *I Believe in Preaching*, p.83.
- 19 D.Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1971), p.18.
- 20 Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), p.15.
- 21 John H. Armstrong, 'Preaching - God's Way to Reformation and Revival', *Reformation and Revival I* (1992):11.
- 22 William H. Willimon, *Integrative Preaching: The Pulpit at the Centre* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1981), p.41.
- 23 Henri H. M. Nouwen, *Creative Ministry* (New York: Doubleday, 1971), p.xxi.
- 24 Willimon, *Integrative Preaching*, p.36.
- 25 Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, p.37.
- 26 *ibid*, p.40.
- 27 Matt. 4:17.
- 28 Matt. 10:7.
- 29 Acts 3, 4, 6.
- 30 2Tim. 4:2.
- 31 Willimon, *Integrative Preaching*, p.13.
- 32 W. T. Kirwan, *Biblical Concepts for Christian Counselling. A Case for Integrative Psychology and Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), p.38.
- 33 *ibid*, p.40.
- 34 *ibid*, p.38.
- 35 *ibid*
- 36 2 Cor. 5:18-21.
- 37 R W Christensen, 'The Implication of the Biblical Phrase "In Christ" for Christian Mission', (PhD dissertation, University of South Africa, 1979), p.158.
- 38 Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, p.37.
- 39 William Bridge, *A Lifting up for the Down-cast* (London: Banner of Truth, 1961).
- 40 *ibid*
- 41 Jeremiah Burroughs, *The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment* (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1964), p.19.
- 42 Thomas Brooks, *Works*, Vol. 4: 260, quoted in Peter Lewis, *The Genius of Puritanism*, p.87.
- 43 Peter Lewis, 'The Doctor as a Preacher', in *Martyn Lloyd-Jones. Chosen by God*, ed. Christopher Catherwood (Sussex: Highland Books, 1986), p.90.
- 44 D. M. Lloyd-Jones, *The Christian Warfare* (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1976), p.206.
- 45 *ibid*

The Carey Family Conference

Andrew King

For the second year running the Carey Family Conference was held at Cloverley Hall where you could be forgiven for thinking Christmas comes twice a year – at least the carol singing every morning at Carey 97 might have created this impression. David Ellis of Stowmarket gave a series of expositions of the 'Nativity Psalms', the prophecies surrounding Jesus' birth, in Luke's Gospel. In the middle of the year, these were a spiritual tonic. Freed from the trappings and wrappings of Christmas the incarnation is a powerful subject.

Evening ministry included historical talks on Revival by Michael Haykin from Ontario. 19th-century history turned out to be not only interesting, but highly relevant for today. Other evening ministry included David Kingdon on Deuteronomy 1 and Erroll Hulse on Ezekiel 37.

The Carey teaching programme is much more than the main meetings. Bible Study seminars from John and Exodus ran concurrently with a teenage seminar. The older children's group looked at the life of Adoniram Judson while the youngest children had some basic Bible teaching.

Even given the wealth of ministry, what makes Carey special is that it is so definitely a holiday. About half of the attendees this year availed themselves of the opportunity to include the weekend before in their stay at a very small extra charge. There are plenty of places to visit locally, but staying put is very popular. The house and grounds are beautiful, the swimming pool and games rooms popular, sports are well organised but not obligatory, and the fellowship is excellent. The concert on the final night was a highlight as ever. So far as food and home comforts are concerned, David Burton and the staff at Cloverley do us proud. We look forward to next year!



Stephen and Ruth Nicholls of Horsham, leaders of the younger children's work at the Carey Family Conference

Whatever age you are, if you are looking for a summer holiday based around solid biblical ministry in lovely surroundings, with people who know how to let their hair down, you could do a lot worse than the Carey Family Conference 1998.

Further details from: David & Carol Jarrett, Penglais, 6a Soar Close, Croesceiliog, Cwmbran, Gwent, NP44 2PD. Tel 01633 866214.

Cassettes available are: 5 on *The Birth of Christ* by David Ellis; a series of 5 on *Ezekiel and his Ministry* by Erroll Hulse; 2 on *The Revival among the early 19th-century Baptists* (The Concert of Prayer) by Prof Michael Haykin; and 1 on *Deuteronomy* by David Kingdon.

Order from *Carey Conference Cassettes*, Crag House Farm, Smithy Lane, Cookridge, Leeds LS16 7NH (tel 0113 261 2131) at £3 each plus postage.

The Puritans and Expository Preaching

Editor

Underlying the preaching of the Puritans are three basic axioms¹ which we would do well to observe.

1. Preaching has a unique place to convert, to feed and to sustain.
2. The life of the preacher must radiate the reality of what he preaches.
3. Prayer and solid Bible study are basic to effective preaching.

1. Preaching has a unique place to convert, to feed and to sustain

The Puritans believed in the primacy of preaching. To them there was no substitute. Nothing else addresses the whole person, mind, affections, conscience and will, like preaching. Nothing else comes with authority from God himself. Nothing else is inhabited by God the Holy Spirit in the unique way that preaching is. The Son of Man himself came to preach as did the one who prepared the way for him. The multitude did not go out into the wilderness to hear a lecture from John the Baptist. A rock formed his pulpit and the heavens his sounding board. He preached. And when his hearers arrived John did not flatter them or set out to make them feel good. His aim was to bring them to repentance.

Tremendous forces oppose the prime place of preaching today. As in the days of the apostles there are religionists who think that the power of God is vested in signs, wonders and miracles. Even though nothing happens except in their imagination this idea persists. But those who persevere in their calling to preach are rewarded in the testimony of changed lives.

Then the prime role of preaching is often usurped by 'methods'. Energies are exhausted in administration or in counselling. Effective expository preaching requires enormous discipline of mind and heart. Preaching as the vehicle by which God's power is revealed ebbs away when distractions have left minimum time to attend to it. Thankfully there are several large and even mega congregations in the USA where expository preaching is practised. Don Carson of Trinity College, Deerfield maintains that he does not know of one effective expository Bible preacher in the USA who has not taken measures rigorously to protect the primacy of prayer and study (Acts 6:2). There is a

balance to be kept. Pastoring and caring for people is vital but the imperative exercise of study must not be neglected. The Scriptures liken the expositor to an ox treading out the grain (1 Tim 5:18).

2. The life of the preacher must radiate the reality of what he preaches.

Prominent in the minds of hearers, especially visitors, as they listen to a preacher is the question, 'Does this man live out what he preaches?' Moses' companions had no doubt about whose company Moses had kept when he came down from Mount Sinai. Paul exhorted Timothy: *'Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers'* (1 Tim 4:16).

Addressing ministers, Richard Baxter wrote, 'Content not yourselves with being in a state of grace, but be also careful that your graces are kept in vigorous and lively exercise, and that you preach to yourselves the sermons which you study, before you preach them to others.'

The apostle Paul was able to commend his way of life to Timothy, 'You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings' (1 Tim 3:10).

The close connection between the holy life of the preacher and the flock to which he preaches is apparent in a further statement from Baxter: 'If we let our love decline, we are not likely to raise up theirs. If we feed on unwholesome food, either errors or fruitless controversies, our hearers are like to fare the worse for it. Whereas, if we abound in faith, and love, and zeal, how would it overflow to the refreshing of our congregations, and how would it appear in the increase of the same graces in them!'

If hypocrisy is to be avoided then the preacher needs to epitomise the message that he is preaching in his life style and in his demeanour.

3. Prayer and solid Bible study are basic to effective preaching.

The priority of prayer is clearly seen in the example of the apostles: *'Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give ourselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word'* (Acts 6:2). Jesus commenced and consummated his ministry in prayer (Luke 3:21,22; 24:49-51).

Prayer embraces the people to whom we minister. 'Far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by ceasing to pray for you' (1 Sam 12:23). We relate to the lives and needs of the people we address in preaching.

It was in the midst of conflict and criticism that the apostles asserted that their priorities were prayer and study. What minister is not the object of criticism, some of it warranted? You cannot please everyone. How do we answer criticisms? Our answer is prayer. We are not above contradiction, indeed we should encourage our hearers to share their criticisms with us. With some we can use humour about ourselves so they will see that that we genuinely seek to strive after humility and to please the Lord in everything. But spiritual attitudes can only be maintained through a life of prayer.

Sometimes Christians have a distorted view of how the Holy Spirit works. They imagine that the Spirit directly communicates and inspires preaching and therefore it is unspiritual to write out sermons or to follow carefully prepared outlines. Little do they know how much prayer goes into preparation. When the preacher decides on a series of expositions this is a major undertaking which will be arrived at only after fervent prayer and meditation. The Holy Spirit honours prayerful, dedicated work, 'Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth' (2 Tim 2:15).

Characteristics of Puritan Preaching

1. Expository
2. Progressional or systematic
3. Exegetical
4. Doctrinal (instructional)
5. Structural
6. Applicatory (pastoral)
7. Practical
8. Experimental
9. Trinitarian
10. Evangelistic
11. Powerful (spiritually compelling)
12. Popular (relevant and attractive)

As we examine the principal features of Puritan preaching I am not suggesting that all the Puritans exemplified all these qualities all the time or indeed that it

is possible for any preacher adequately to fulfil them all in one sermon. You cannot say everything every time. For instance in his description of the Great Judgment in Matthew 25 our Lord does not even mention faith. Why should he? The necessity of faith is spelled out in other places. It is a mistake to overpack a sermon. The average person is limited in the amount of material he can absorb in one sitting. The best kind of preaching, rarely possible and rarely achieved, is the kind in which one great main point is driven home so that the hearers never forget the impact.

The task is exceedingly difficult. Paul says, 'And who is equal to such a task?' (2 Cor 2:16). Although he was in the formal sense of college or university education the most under-privileged of the Puritans John Bunyan came closest to exemplifying all these features, characteristics which can be used like a check list. Bunyan in God's providence can act as an encouragement to many who feel inferior because they have lacked the advantages of seminary training.

When a preacher is coming near to completing the preparation of his sermon, he may well ask the following questions: Is this sermon really expository? Is my text in harmony with the context? Is it exegetical? Have I fathomed the precise meaning of the text or am I making it say what I would like it to say? Is there doctrinal instruction? Will my hearers be built up in the great central truths of the faith?

Have I assembled my material with the best possible structure, easy to follow, logically connected, easy to remember? As I preach this sermon am I dealing with my people pastorally? Am I mindful of and sympathetic with their struggles and temptations? And is this exposition practical? What are they expected to do about it? Is my sermon experimental? Will hearts be warmed? Will Christians be delighted in their union with Father, Son and Holy Spirit?

And what about those in the congregation who do not believe? How will this affect them? Will it be powerful? How can I bring my hearers to repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ? Will I be used to compel them to come in? (Luke 14:23). What is there about my sermon which makes it appealing and attractive? Our Lord used references to nature and Thomas Watson used delightful pithy metaphors and similes. How can I emulate my Master and some of his best servants to make my preaching the effective vehicle of salvation and edifying to believers?

Of the above twelve features I will select number 10 for further detail.

Evangelistic

The word Trinity is not mentioned in the Bible and the words evangelism and revival are not used in Puritan literature. Yet all the fundamental truths which fuel evangelism and revival were preached constantly by the Puritans.

Robert Bolton expressed the matter clearly when he asserted, 'The Lord Jesus Christ is offered most freely, and without exception of any person, every Sabbath, every sermon, either in plain, and direct terms, or implied, at the least.'²

The Puritans held to a definite atonement, an atonement which does not just make salvation possible but actually brings home every elect child of God, yet they exhorted and invited all indiscriminately to come to Christ. As the NIV translates John 3:19, 'This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.' The Puritans believed in the general love of God for all mankind. It is a fallen evil world that God loved. The Father presents his Son as salvation for every one who believes. The Puritans were totally uninhibited in preaching the free offers of the gospel. Puritan preachers reasoned, pleaded, persuaded, invited, warned, constrained; they implored, 'Be reconciled to God' (2 Cor 5:20).

The very heart of God is expounded by Richard Greenhill in his opening up of Ezekiel chapter 18:23, '*Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked? declares the Sovereign LORD. Rather, am I not pleased when they turn from their ways and live?*' Richard Baxter took Ezekiel 18 as the basis for his best-selling evangelistic book *A Call to the Unconverted*, a classic which has been transposed into modern language and style by John Blanchard and reprinted by Evangelical Press as a 120 page paperback with the title *Invitation to Live*. One chapter is titled *God's Word of Honour*. Baxter: God is so concerned that men should not question these truths that he solemnly confirms them with an oath.

John Howe too in his *The Redeemer's Tears Wept over Lost Souls* reveals the heart of God. Howe concludes his 67 page treatise the way he preached: 'His tears signify how very intent he is to save souls, and how gladly he would save thine, if yet thou wilt accept of mercy while it may be had. For if he weep over them that will not be saved, from the same love that is the spring of those tears would saving mercies proceed to those that are become willing to receive them.'³

A substantial part of Puritan evangelistic preaching was uncompromising exposition on God's justice, sin, guilt, wrath and eternal punishment. Hence

the awesome sermon by John Owen on Ezekiel 17:17-22, *The Furnace of Divine Wrath*.¹ Typical is Ralph Venning on the torments of hell which he describes as great, terrible, universal, without intermission, appallingly aggravated if the privileges of gospel preaching have been rejected and abused. Venning pleads, 'Mind the good of your soul and do not bring on yourself this great, universal, intolerable, and eternal damnation.'⁵

Did it Work?

Benjamin Brook in three volumes describes several hundreds of Puritan ministries. Many highly effective ministers were scattered throughout the land. For instance, Richard Fairclough ministered at a little village called Mells in Somerset. When he died aged 61 in 1682, John Howe preached his funeral service from which we gather that people from miles around thronged to hear Fairclough preach. 'O how that congregation hath been wont to melt under his most fruitful ministry. His prayers, sermons, and other ministerial performances had that strange pungency, quickness and authority with them, at some times; that softness, gentleness, sweetness, alluringness at others, that one would think it scarcely possible to resist the spirit and power by which he spoke. And the effect did in blessed measure correspond; they became a much enlightened, knowing, judicious, reformed, religious people. His labours were almost incredible. His whole heart was in his work. Every day, for many years together, he used to rise at three in the mornings, or sooner, and to be with God (which was his dear delight) when others slept.'⁶

References

- 1 J I Packer in his article *Puritan Preaching* (RT68) outlines four axioms: i. The primacy of the intellect ii. The supreme importance (primacy) of preaching iii. Belief in the life-giving power of biblical truths iv. The sovereignty of the Holy Spirit. With regard to the first, the primacy of the mind, compared to our feelings-centred age the Puritans were robust in their demands on the mind, but I do not think for one moment that they were self-consciously saying, I must direct this to the mind. In his writings on the Puritans J I Packer (cf *Among God's Giants*, page 79) shows that hearers were addressed affectionately and intellectually. Geoff Thomas in the book *Preaching* (EP) says, 'One of the great perils that face preachers of the Reformed Faith is the problem of a hyper-intellectualism, that is, the constant danger of lapsing into a purely cerebral form of proclamation, which falls exclusively on the intellect. Men become obsessed with doctrine and end up brain-oriented preachers. There is consequently a fearful impoverishment in their hearers emotionally, devotionally and practically. Such pastors are men of books and not men of people; they know doctrines, but they know nothing of the emotional side of religion' (page 369).
- 2 Robert Bolton, *A Treatise on Comforting Afflicted Consciences*, 1626, republished by Soli Deo Gloria, 1992. Sorry I cannot locate the page but I know the quote is there!
- 3 John Howe, *Works*, vol 2, page 379.
- 4 John Owen, *Works*, vol 16 page 425.
- 5 Ralph Venning, *The Plague of Plagues*, Banner of Truth paperback, page 92.
- 6 John Howe, *Works* vol 3, page 389ff.

News

Russia

Anti-evangelical law passed

A major reversal has taken place in Russia where it was hoped that anti-evangelical legislation could be avoided. This was not to be as is reported in the following letter from the pastor who leads a 300 member (unregistered) Baptist church in Moscow:

Dear Friends in Christ,

We address you in that moment of history when the State's Duma has accepted the new law on religion. This law was considered by the President, and cosmetic amendments, not changing its essence, were brought in. Neither Duma, nor the President have wanted to count the thousands of petitions and requests about rejection of the new law. They made us understand that the old times have returned, when they did not ask the people which laws for them should be issued. The main creators of the law were the Orthodox hierarchy and communists, both being cruel persecutors of any dissidence in the past, but now having common ideological, political and commercial interests. The law fixes a dominant position of the Orthodox Church in our society and puts all other religions on different steps below. All religious organizations that are younger than 15 years are debarred of the rights of legal entity or the rights of basic public activities, and foreign missionaries are being practically put out of the country.

This point of fact simply means that once again in our country, as in the near past, there is no freedom of conscience any more and the process of democratization of society is stopped, for there can be neither democracy nor a legal State without liberty of faith. The country with medieval inquisitorial laws cannot bring any good to the people either in its own



Vladimir Zinchenko

land or on the international arena. Along with the acceptance of the law has come an epoch of ideological violence and propagation on a broad scale of the superiority of one religion above others. Inevitably it will be followed by persecution in brutal physical form.

Being Christians, we do not shun persecution, for such is our lot predicted by Christ, but as citizens of the country we express our position of holy disobedience, at whatever cost, to any encroachment on our sacred right to freely preach the gospel and build the Church of Christ. We would ask you to support us in your prayers and also, as it is written 'whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might' (Eccl



Ruins of a Christian church in Khartoum after demolition by Islamic extremists

9:10), so that this legalized lawlessness will be abolished for ever from the history of our long-suffering country.

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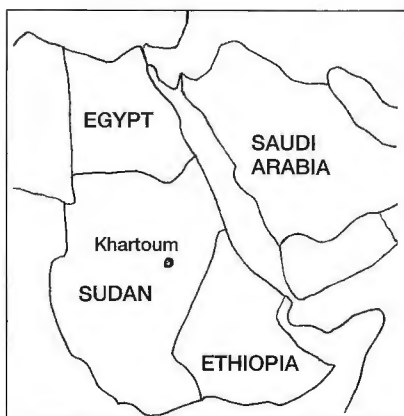
Sudan

Sudan has a population of about 29 million but represents the largest land mass in Africa varying from desert in the north to grasslands in the centre and tropical bush in the south.

There has been persecution of the church over the last 40 years but increasingly so since 1985. Efforts to eliminate the Christian Church have included bombing of Sunday church services, destruction of church buildings and Christian villages, massacres even with mass crucifixions in some areas, killing of pastors and leaders and a 'food for conversion to Islam' policy among refugees. Sudan's leaders boast that they are the leaders of the Islamic Revolution in Africa and have used this as a tool to consolidate their personal control of the economy and political power. Moderate Muslims have

also suffered under the policies so extreme that aid agencies have been prevented from reaching starving peoples.

Timothy Alford is director of the Africa Inland Mission, a missionary society which works in 14 nations in Africa and the Indian Ocean. Of all his travels in Africa Timothy Alford describes his time in Sudan as the most stirring. In spite of extreme adversity believers have multiplied. He writes: 'When my wife and I arrived in the capital Khartoum we expected to find a weak and discouraged church. Living within the influence of North Africa's most active and aggressive Islamic country, how could it be otherwise? In fact we found a church that is growing and resilient, led by spiritually-minded young men who are visionary and dynamic. Being fully persuaded that the biblical promises concerning Cush apply to the Sudan (Psalm 68:31, 'Cush will submit herself to God'), these radiant pastors and evangelists serve the Lord with unrivalled zeal and expectancy. They took us into the camps where two million displaced persons subsist on the edges of the desert and introduced us to the new churches that have been planted there. To be among people whose love for the Lord overflowed in expressions of love for us was totally overwhelming.'



Chairman of AIC, Khartoum and his family

In September Tim Alford described by telephone a typical Sudanese situation. A Sudanese church purchases a property and follows all legal requirements for permission to build. As the building nears completion bulldozers arrive. The structure is levelled to the ground. The police stand by and do nothing. To maintain Christian joy in such circumstances is joy indeed!

Burma (Myanmar)

A report by Pastor Russell Bridges of Cornerstone Baptist Church, Bolton

Links with the evangelical churches and ministers of Myanmar continue to develop and the latest visit of Kenneth Brownell and Patrick Buckley August 15 to September 5 saw more doors opening. Both men were worked hard with numerous teaching and preaching engagements arranged for them.

Their time was spent ministering in both Yangon and Mandalay. In Yangon, besides Sunday preaching, they spent three days as guest lecturers at the Myanmar Institute of Theology. This is the largest (300 students) and best known but broadly based theological school in Myanmar.

One new contact in Yangon is Pastor Neng Khan Thang who studied at Reformed Theological Seminary, Jackson, MS, USA. He now works within a Baptist denomination of about 100 churches.

In Mandalay they met Ngung Tlung (see photo page seven) who is really a key figure in evangelicalism in this part of Myanmar. He had set up a busy programme of meetings in Mandalay and was then lecturing at Lisu Theological Seminary in the hill colony formerly known as Maytown.

A fund, *Books for Burma*, has been established following the visit last February of the editor with pastor Jay Baker and myself. It is being administered by Cornerstone Baptist Church in Bolton. The first shipments of books have gone out and it is proposed to send a steady flow of good literature to the desperately under-resourced pastors and theological school libraries. It is important for those who receive the parcels to write and acknowledge them as the supply will only continue when we know that the postal services are functioning properly. Visits like the one just described alert us to the most pressing needs and thus ensure that gifts to the fund are stewarded well.

Brazil

The annual Editora FIEL Conference is organised by Richard Denham mainly for ministers but it also welcomes church members and their families. Although the emphasis is Reformed and Baptist, it is open and attracts evangelicals from a range of denominations including Brethren, Presbyterians and Pentecostals. This year 500 adults with 60-70 children were booked in for 6-10 October.

The preachers were due to be Geoff Thomas from Aberystwyth and Stuart Olyott from Liverpool. However, a week before the leaving date, Stuart became ill and with no more than 2 days in hand, Pastor Andrew King of Haywards Heath Evangelical Free Church was given the go-ahead by his church elders to respond to this call to serve so many evangelicals in a large and needy country even though his commitments at home would have to be rescheduled. He would be taking up to 8 sessions at the FIEL Conference and probably preaching in Brazil on 2 Sundays.

We commend the work of FIEL to the prayers of our readers. The publication programme of fine Reformed literature is outstanding.

Encouragements in the UK

Surrey

Chessington Evangelical Church

In its new venue, The King's Centre, Chessington Evangelical Church members are coming into contact with the community at large each weekday as well as enjoying the freedom of space and facility in their enlarged premises where they are also able better to accommodate visitors.

Many other churches have approached Chessington church members concerning the 'hows and whys' of their recent

development of the £2 million King's Centre project. As a result a one day conference on the theme, '*Getting the church to the heart of the community*', will be held on Saturday, 29 November at the King's Centre.

Pastor Trevor Archer, who managed the project and Bob Robinson, the Centre manager will speak on envisioning and developing community programmes which are appropriate to an evangelical church. Other speakers are Mark Giks and Sir Fred Catherwood. The former was instrumental in facilitating the King's Centre whilst Director of Development at Kingston Council. He will deal with church relationships with local authorities. The latter will bring his nationwide perspective.

For further details contact Patricia Inch, 0181 391 5522.

Liverpool

The Bridge Chapel, Garston

Similar in style is the work at Garston Bridge, Liverpool (Pastor Bill Bygroves). The outreach and effectiveness of the work has been enhanced through the provision of a large school complex which has been redesigned and refurbished to house a congregation of 500. The ancillary buildings are in use for the surrounding community. Sir Fred Catherwood and Steve Brady were the speakers at the opening of the new complex. Leaders in the community were invited to the service and each presented with a Bible accompanied by a first-rate short explanation by Bill Bygroves as to why it is imperative to read the Word of God. From its commencement about 15 years ago 'Garston' has been a great encouragement to evangelicalism on account of the number of whole families that have been converted. There is also constant outreach into the community as well as a day centre for needy people.

The 'Perfect Dunghill' Debate

Editor

Dr William R Estep is the well-known Southern Baptist professor emeritus of Church history at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, TX, USA. He is author of some fine books including *Renaissance and Reformation* (Eerdmans 1986). Prof Estep has recently written against Calvinism in the March 26 *Baptist Standard*, an American paper. *The Founders Journal* (for details see p.2) has republished his article and the whole summer issue of 32 pages is devoted to the subject. Prof Estep concludes his article with five reasons why he is against Calvinism and concludes thus: 'If the Calvinising of Southern Baptists continues unabated, we are in danger of becoming "a perfect dunghill" in American society, to borrow a phrase from Andrew Fuller.'

Prof Estep's writings indicate that he has vast library resources at his command. He should know the difference between Puritan Calvinism and hyper-Calvinism. Sadly the material shows that not only does Dr Estep misunderstand Calvinism but that he is basically extremely hostile to the truth of the sovereignty of God.

Prof Estep is taken to task by Dr Tom Ascol, a former student of his and presently a pastor in Florida and editor of *The Founders Journal* who defends the truth in a worthy and peaceable way (James 3:17). His fine exposition lays the foundation for the articles which follow all of which are characterised by humility and respect for those who differ. Dr Albert Mohler, president of Southern Baptist Seminary, Louisville, expounds on the heart of Calvinism. He refutes the common charge that Calvinism leads to a lessening of evangelistic commitment and missionary vision and goes on to show that Calvinism was the mainstream tradition of the Southern Baptist Convention until the turn of the century. Dr Roger Nicole (influenced by Calvin for 65 years!) contributes to the debate with an open letter to Prof Estep. Dr Nicole enjoys the advantage of a library in French and English of more than 250 volumes by or about Calvin with an additional 1,000 about Calvinism and the Reformed Faith and history. Nicole refutes Estep at every point but particularly on the charge that Calvin erected a whole system of theology on the eternal decrees. Mark Dever contributes to the theme by describing the advance of reformation in the SBC, a reformation which spells hope not only for America but for world-wide evangelicalism. Prof Tom Nettles (who

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recently moved from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois to join the faculty of Southern Seminary, Louisville), contributes to the theme with an exposition on the conserving power of the doctrines of grace. 'Historic Calvinism', says Nettles, 'provides the most theologically integrated rationale for inerrancy of any theological system.'

If Prof Estep protested against Calvinist Ayatollahs we would sympathise with him. Or if he expressed alarm about hyper-Calvinism we would say 'amen'. (One Southern Baptist pastor who has recently embraced hyper-Calvinism has been rebaptised, a renunciation of his former Calvinism!). But sadly it is the historic Reformed faith that Dr Estep opposes.

The Reformed faith is growing around the world. It is unstoppable for several reasons. One is that the best Bible commentaries are in the Reformed tradition. Pastors come to embrace the doctrines of grace as these are revealed by the text of Scripture.

Extremists rationalise the truth. They think that 'more of the same' will result in a superior product. That is not how the Bible works. Fine distinctions must be skilfully maintained. God is transcendent and yet knowable. Jesus is fully divine and yet fully human. Yet another tension is human responsibility and divine sovereignty. It is sad to see Prof Estep floundering on the latter. It is regretted that that he is expressing the kind of prejudice which was common among American leaders some thirty years ago.

A thorough-going biblical reformation in the SBC will bring that great denomination back to her foundations and make her salt and light in America and through her many missionaries she will be a blessing throughout the whole world.

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