

REFORMATION TODAY



WINTER 1996

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We are grateful to Dr Letham for his contribution to this issue (see p. 3). Dr Letham has written *The Work of Christ* in the IVP Contours of Theology series.

Carey Cassettes

The Carey Ministers' Conference is reported by David Earl on page 29. Cassettes are available, each containing one address (see report for details). All profits go to the charity, *Caring for Life*. Cost, £3.00 each plus postage and packing which for the UK is 75p for 1 and 20p extra for each additional cassette. For dollar currency add 50% extra to the above sterling prices.

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Front cover: Mark and Beverly Nieuwoudt (see News) have taken up the pastorate on the Island of St Helena. The photo was taken in Namibia, a nation of 823,000 square kilometres, a land of game reserves and space. Only about two million people inhabit Namibia and most of them are in the northern strip. St Helena is only 122 sq km and the population is about 6,000.

Editorial

Where are we in the universe of philosophy, the way people think today? Where is the Christian Church theologically?

Where are we philosophically? What is post-modernism?

Daunting though this may be we need to know why the Western world is in a state of moral collapse. As in Judah of old, moral decay is followed by the rise of violence and social disorder, uncertainty, and ultimately the severity of God's judgment. We have moved into a post-Christian era in which a whole new philosophy has replaced the old way of thinking. The subject requires a book the size of Don Carson's *The Gagging of God* (640 pages, IVP, 1996) to do it justice (see review by Bill James – *Christianity Confronts Pluralism*, RT152). Bob Letham has given us a masterly overview of post-modernism (PM) in 16 pages, the first part of which appears in this issue. Part two, to be published next time, is encouraging because it provides practical advice and sounds a note of optimism.

Is PM really a matter of prime importance? The answer is that we are affected by PM continually, through the mass media, in our schools and institutions of learning and even in the mentality of our church members. One aspect is the breakdown of morality. As a-morality replaces traditional Christian morality we see the breakdown of marriage and the family. The

number of single parents rises steadily and the money to pay the rising costs is simply not there. Now the British taxpayer is required to pay for the foreign minister Robin Cook's mistress (Cook's marriage has broken down) to be funded to accompany him on his foreign trips. As the decline continues we can anticipate the day when harems must be so funded! Sharon James's review of the secular book *Britain on the Couch* is in itself a vivid reminder of the appalling damage that continues to be inflicted by the ongoing malaise.

If there had not been a revival of the doctrine of the sovereignty of God we would be totally vulnerable, but the Church has been equipped to meet the challenge of PM. To that we now turn.

The Theological Renewal, 1950-2000. Phil Arthur, pastor of the Free Grace Church, Lancaster outlines for us the life of David Jones of Sunderland. Pastors whose lives and ministries were transformed by the theological renewal sought to bring reformation to their churches. Some succeeded but many did not. David Jones was dismissed from his church and compelled to start again. Traditional Arminian thinking and practice are not easy to change.

The recovery of the Reformed faith in twentieth-century England is described by Dr Robert Oliver in an excellent historical analysis published by the Evangelical Library with the title *A Glorious Heritage*.¹ Dr Oliver traces the rediscovery of the value and rele-

vance of Puritan literature. He points to the leadership role of Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones who in 1960 was almost alone in his age group but was at the centre of a whole new generation of younger men who looked to him in a way they looked to no-one else. Phil Arthur confirms that with regard to David Jones of Sunderland.

The important factor of decline and disappointment in the process of the renewal is analysed by Dr Oliver. He observes that the excitement in rediscovering the Reformed faith led to great optimism and hope for a revival which did not materialise. When revival did not come some looked to the charismatic movement for inspiration but that did not bring revival either. At that time the Reformed movement had to survive the criticisms, inflated claims and doctrinal errors of the charismatic movement. Dr Oliver recalls the time during the 1970s when some began to suggest that the Reformed movement had had its day. His historical review of that time and subsequently is most helpful. "There may have been a winnowing process, but valuable work continued to be done. Books of outstanding value continued to appear. Conferences continued to be held. Men were drawn to the Reformed faith still. A quiet but faithful work continued in many churches."² The beginnings of a movement are always more exciting than periods of consolidation. The Word of God was being faithfully

preached and new works were established. It also became clear that the Reformed faith was being taught and received internationally on a scale never before known! All this is going forward today.

We must not despise the day of small things. Above all we must not give up praying for revival. The review of *'When Heaven Touched Earth – The Awakening of 1858 and its Effects on Baptists'*, reminds us that revival from heaven is not a dream, but reality. *'When the LORD brought back the captives to Zion, we were like men who dreamed. Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy. Then it was said among the nations, "The LORD has done great things for them" ' (Ps 126:1-2).*

References

- 1 Robert W Oliver, Evangelical Library Annual Lecture for 1997 published as a 27 page booklet, *A Glorious Heritage*, obtainable from Evangelical Library, 78A Chiltern St, London W1M 2HB, £1.95 + 40p postage. The fact that the Evangelical Library has constantly supplied the essential literature resources for the theological renewal since 1950 reminds us of our indebtedness and the need to support the Library with our gifts.
- 2 Dr Oliver quotes J R Green in his *Short History of the English People 1878* (1909) page 460, in which he asserts, 'No greater moral change ever passed over a nation than passed over England during the years which parted the middle of the reign of Elizabeth I from the meeting of the Long Parliament. England became the people of a book, and that book was the Bible.' The work was done by pastors most of whose names we do not know today but their labours were effective.

Post-Modernism and the Christian Faith

Dr Robert Letham, Senior Minister, Emmanuel Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Wilmington, Delaware, USA

Part 1

I am sure we have all heard the term ‘post-modernism’ from time to time. Equally certain is it that most who have heard it have little clue as to its meaning. Yet it is pervasive in the world today and a threat to the Christian faith. What exactly is it and what is its significance for us?

Post-modernism (PM) pervades virtually every facet of life. If you have ever encountered the stress on diversity in the corporate world or the media, seen the mass hysteria following the death of Princess Diana, if you are aware of the constantly shifting statements of leading politicians in the USA, the disintegration of large and seemingly impregnable countries including the rapid regionalisation of Canada, if you have ever wondered why there is now such emphasis on the way people feel, then you have encountered PM. Dangerous new challenges to the Christian faith have surfaced with the rise of PM. They may even be present in your own church for, believe me, this is something that affects all of us, every day of our lives.

Before we consider PM in detail, we need to know what was the modernism to which PM is post. The modern world was born in the Enlightenment, from around 1700, and lasted at the popular level through to the third quarter of the twentieth century. Its features were an optimistic belief in human progress, based on a high evaluation of reason, stemming from a rejection of the Christian worldview taught in the Bible. Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), a dominant figure of the Enlightenment, held that scientific knowledge is founded on observation through the senses. Religion, not being based on empirical observation and verification, belongs in a category apart from science. This led to the widespread myth of objective science and bred a deep bias against the supernatural. Miracles were unacceptable and so the virgin birth, the incarnation, the resurrection and the deity of Christ were rejected by those who shared this way of thinking. Many of us will have encountered this problem. Only ten years or so ago, I remember a well-known New Testament scholar in England, nearing retirement, saying in a seminar that the modern world with its scientific sophistication could not accept many of the tenets of

historic Christianity, for they conflicted with the everyday experience of the man in the street, who did not see miracles or resurrections happening.

Again, this worldview encouraged a split between faith and history. Faith belongs to the religious realm (the noumenal) beyond scientific or historical investigation. The claim that Christianity is an historical religion ran aground against the counterclaim by the children of the Enlightenment that historical events cannot establish ultimate truth and thus the historical resurrection of Christ as the Church had proclaimed it could not establish the religious truth that the Christian faith held dear. Moreover, the modern stress on reason was set against an authority imposed from outside, such as that of Scripture. While reason, under the authority of God's revelation, is vital the post-Enlightenment use of reason was autonomous, independent of the Bible or the teachings of the Church. Thus liberalism, at its height at the end of the nineteenth century, focused on history and the historical Jesus, where the Gospel records were held to be subject to scientific, historical investigation, and looked askance at anything it could not fit into its own predisposed categories.

Evangelicalism was a reaction of Christianity to this worldview, and in many ways an adaptation to it. Whereas right-wing fundamentalism ignored modernism, evangelicalism took over some of its features, stressing regeneration, sanctification and evangelism – all good and necessary but at the same time directed to the human end of the gospel in contrast to the historic faith down through the ages. The Church historically had confessed faith in the Holy Trinity, the incarnation of Christ, the Church and sacraments. There were, of course, many other elements to Christianity. The Bible, after all, talks of many things – of ships, and shoes, and sealing wax, of cabbages and kings. Yet the contents of the Nicene creed, focusing as I say on Trinity, incarnation, Church and sacraments, were the hard core of the faith. Evangelicalism, responding to modernism, went down a new and different route concentrating its energies on matters relating to man and personal salvation.¹

Modernism undermined

A number of factors combined to undermine the modernism of the Enlightenment. First, developments in physics destroyed Kant's assumption that there were two separate realms, the physical and observable on the one hand, the spiritual, religious and ethical on the other. The theories of relativity established that matter and energy are interchangeable, approaching the speed of light, and thus are part of a continuum. The observable and non-observable are not two separate realms. With light foundational to the universe, what can

be observed is to be interpreted in terms of what cannot be observed – the space-time continuum is not something you can see, hear or smell, nor is light something you see so much as a medium through which you see. Thus the realms of science and the spiritual are distinct but not separate. In addition, these advances disclosed the limitations of logic as one approaches the boundaries of the universe. Not only did Einstein, in his autobiography, indicate that he held the invariance (relativity) theory from the age of 16 by intuition but, following the Michelson-Morley experiment of 1887 it became clear that light does not behave according to the rules of formal or symbolic logic. Later the co-existence of the wave and particle theories of light reinforced this, theories that appear to cancel each other out logically (how can light behave like discrete particles and also as continuous waves?) but are both nonetheless true. We could also point to the famous uncertainty principle of Heisenberg, demonstrating the inexactitude of all human scientific measurements, and to Godel's theorems in mathematics establishing that systems cannot simultaneously be consistent and complete. In short, physics demonstrated the limits of logic. Nature is a given and is not under the dominion of human reason.

Second, the Enlightenment's belief in human progress and the powers of reason was shattered by two world wars, the horrors of Auschwitz, Hiroshima and other atrocities, and by a growing awareness of an emerging ecological crisis. Human nature no longer appeared benign. The Western world had bred monstrous deeds almost beyond belief. How dramatically unexpected this was can be gauged by consulting the British press in late July 1914. Only four days before the outbreak of the First World War, the most devastating war in history, *The Times* has hardly anything on the crisis brewing in Europe. The main problem the educated classes faced was the temperature of the water on the beaches of England and the west and south of France. A world of complacent optimism was about to be swept away. Disillusionment came a little later to North America, the turmoil of the sixties, Vietnam and Watergate banishing the naivety of an innocent and blinkered Americanism. All told, confidence in human ability to shape and control the world so as to produce continuous progress and an increasingly fulfilling lifestyle was undermined. Many started to explore the non-rational. Eastern mysticism and the occult entered in a big way, the New Age movement emerging out of the ashes of hippiedom. With this sea change emotion replaces reason, image triumphs over substance.

Third, the destructive effect of ideology seen in Nazism, Communism and religious manipulation led to a deepening suspicion of strongly held truth claims. It seems to me no accident that some of the chief exponents of PM are

French, for continental Europe bore much of the brunt of destructive, intolerant ideology this century. But religion, including cults identified in some way with Christianity, is not exempt. The Jonestown massacre of 1978 stemmed from an originally Christian Church, while many evangelical leaders have created spiritual and emotional pressure on their followers described by one writer as like a floodlit concentration camp.

The world that has emerged in the last quarter of the century is a very different one. It has a generally pessimistic view of human progress. The scientific and technological advances of previous centuries are frequently questioned, their negative impact as much in view as their positive. In addition, the modern world's reliance on reason is now replaced by a preference for emotion. Successful sports personnel are asked less to analyse the game and more often questioned as to how they feel afterwards. The cardinal fault in inter-personal relations now is to hurt someone's feelings. After Princess Diana's death, the normally reserved British were seen to wear their emotions on their sleeve. The public refused to allow members of the Royal Family to grieve as a family, insisting they bawl their eyes out in front of millions. Descartes' 'I think, therefore I am' has been swept aside by PM man's 'I emote, therefore I am.' Again, distrust of ideology is elevated to ideological status. New Labour in Britain insists it has no dogmas. Pluralism in society is reflected in the acceptance of more or less equally valid insights from disparate religious sources. In terms of Christianity the old evangelicalism has splintered with the demise of the Enlightenment worldview and as PM developed. In its place has emerged the charismatic movement, reflecting a kinship with PM in its reliance on emotion above reason, its replacement of linear, progressive hymns characteristic of the whole Judeo-Christian tradition by cyclical, repetitive choruses and by its collapsing of the physical and spiritual into one.

Thankfully, the old objections to Christianity no longer carry the weight they did as the cultural assumptions that supported them have crumbled. Autonomous human reason has, to an extent, been dethroned. The scientific worldview made possible by James Clerk Maxwell (a devout elder in the Church of Scotland) and Einstein is no longer inherently hostile to Christianity. But a new situation has emerged, creating other, potentially even more serious obstacles. While emotions are not to be shunned, for God created them and intended us to respond to him with our whole being, there are peculiar and sinister dangers in a world shaped not by considered thought but by image and gut-feelings. These dangers relate to civil society and the rule of law, and also to the Church and its faithfulness to Christ. Ancient Israel faced similar temptations from Canaanite religion. God revealed himself to the whole person through the mind or understanding. For the Canaanites religion was

directed from somewhere below the head. We will consider these dangers in greater detail later.

The modern world was shaped by philosophers like Descartes and Kant and the natural science that developed from their assumptions, seen in people like Isaac Newton. With PM, various earlier philosophies coined by Nietzsche, Marx and Heidegger have been taken and developed. Not scientists but literary critics are in the vanguard of this new world. We will turn our attention to them next time.

The PM world is a world without objective meaning or absolute truth

In order to understand PM and see its far-reaching implications we need to know what has been happening in literary criticism in the last few decades. Science, at least in its Newtonian, pre-Einsteinian form drove the Enlightenment worldview. In the vanguard of PM is not science but literary criticism. In the past, philosophical and scientific developments took several generations to filter through to the general public but now the impact of the academy is felt very quickly throughout society. This is due to the wider spread of higher education and to astounding improvements in communication, fueled by revolutions in technology. We are living too close to events to say for sure whether the literary critics are responsible for fomenting social change or whether they themselves are symptoms of wider cultural developments but, whatever the truth may be, their work demonstrates with great clarity the nature of the world in which we now live.

The thrust of much of the work of Roland Barthes (1915-80), Michel Foucault (1926-84), and Jacques Derrida (b.1930) is that human language, whether spoken or written, does not refer to an objective world out there but is instead a system of linguistic signs referring back to itself. You might well believe when you say, 'It is raining' that you are talking about a definite, objective state of affairs in the real world, that could be checked by looking out of the window. Again, when you read the Gospel of Matthew you may consider that the author intended to describe events that happened in Palestine in the first century concerning Jesus, whom Peter called 'the Son of the living God' and whom the author portrays as risen from the dead. However, for these literary critics language is merely a system of signs, a language game. There is no point in asking what the original speaker or author intended to say, for the author is forever lost to us. We simply have a text before us, to which you, the reader, can give any meaning you wish. As such, there is no objective world beyond your own interpretation. Meaning itself is endlessly deferred. Indeed,

according to Barthes talk of an objective world is really an attempt by bourgeois elites to maintain power by manipulation. Language, all language (whether spoken or written) refers simply to itself. For Derrida, a text has no point of reference outside itself. Fixed meanings are generated by 'a mobile army of metaphors'.

This has serious consequences all round, none more so than for claims of absolute truth, claims that such and such is true in all times and places. For exponents of PM, truth claims are in reality attempts to manipulate people, bids for power and control. Historic Christianity comes obviously into this category. PM critics seek to unmask these hidden agendas underlying claims of absolute truth by a procedure known as deconstruction. Like peeling an onion, they remove layer upon layer of surface claims to get at the real manipulative core underneath. PM is deeply suspicious of the advertising industry, which puts us all at the mercy of someone's desire to exert power over us economically in an inherently deceitful way. The Christian Church is an obvious target for deconstruction since it has wielded power over its adherents and, in some cases, whole cultures. Nietzsche argued that Christianity meets the desire for comfort, security and self-importance, all expressions of self-interest. Pietism and evangelicalism sought to drive people to despair, break them because of their sins and so gain power over them. Graham Shaw argues that appeals to an all-knowing God trap people in a 'floodlit concentration camp' particularly if his representatives 'seem to possess some access to the omniscience with which they credited him'.²

In fact, for post-modernists beliefs are simply the preferred options of a cultural group, like a taste for ice-cream. You believe the way you do because the group with which you mix believes that way and you are happy and comfortable with it like that. If you are a Christian believer this is due to your associating with others who hold these opinions, nothing more. Just as for any other belief system, whether Marxism, Islam, Zen Buddhism or whatever, all is culturally and socially conditioned. This fits well with a tolerant pluralism in which any and all beliefs are more or less equally legitimate, all insights that are welcome but which cannot and do not claim to be true other than for the one who has them. For Derrida, reality slips by before we can catch hold of it. No group can claim it has the truth since the truth (if indeed there can be said to be any) is endlessly elusive.

The obstacles PM puts in the way of the Christian faith should be very evident. As you present the gospel to your friend or neighbour, you may well be living and speaking in a completely different universe. You will believe you are telling him he is a sinner and that the only way to forgiveness and to

acceptance with God is through Jesus Christ, the only Saviour of sinners. The first problem is that if you make clear that this is true for all times and places, your friend may well suspect you of an arrogant attempt to manipulate him, to gain power over him. If you think this far-fetched, why has New Labour in Britain shed its old ideology, insisting it is now free from dogma, so ushering in a new Britain, even a new Europe? It is because of the new intense distrust of all universal or totalising discourses, in the words of David Harvey. The second, and probably more widespread obstacle to leading your friend to faith in Christ is that he will acknowledge that your belief is an insight that has helped you come to terms with yourself and your environment, but that will very likely be all. Christianity is personally and individually qualified, a matter of taste. Absolute truth is not possible. The Christian gospel cannot be objectively true or as such applicable at all times and places and therefore to anyone who does not share a taste for it or for whom it is not a particularly helpful insight.

Do not think these attitudes are uncommon, confined to a few self-conscious intellectuals with too much time on their hands or with a need to justify a salary cheque. They have invaded churches. Have you not heard regular churchgoers at Bible studies pooling their impressions, often muddled and contradictory, without the leader ever distinguishing between what is a true comment from a false one? I heard this sort of thing myself many years ago in a church in the USA with 'Reformed' in its name. This practice is a form of succumbing to PM. Clearly, there is a wide area where such sharing of insights may have a place and be entirely appropriate but not where the issue of truth is involved.

Behind this, most ministers today are educated without reference to systematic theology. Even in the most conservative of theological seminaries on both sides of the Atlantic biblical studies of various kinds have priority. Now I have absolutely nothing against biblical studies. However, the downgrading of systematic theology reflects very starkly the influence of PM, for it is perceived as a 'totalising discourse' as it seeks to present an orderly, rational account of God's revelation and combat false ideas about it. As a result a whole generation of ministers has been produced who are unprepared to defend the faith or to bring together the parts into a coherent whole. They are now in churches all over the world. Let me illustrate this from another area in which I have first-hand knowledge. Calvin studies are thriving at present, for scholars from widely differing backgrounds are discovering the genius and timelessness of John Calvin, and this is all to the good. A generation or so ago rafts of work were done on Calvin's theology but few are interested in his theology now. Instead, interest turned first to his biblical exegesis. This was right as Calvin's sermons had been greatly neglected and preaching was right

at the heart of his life's work. But it was an interest that arose to the neglect of theology, even to the extent that Calvin was no longer considered to have been interested in constructing a theology as such. Latterly, there has been a further development in the study of Calvin's rhetoric. In fact, in a major biography of Calvin published in 1987 ('no one will be able to ignore it', one reviewer wrote) William J Bouwsma even argued that Calvin was not at all interested in whether what he taught was true but rather his prime concern was the effect he had on his readers or hearers. Bouwsma could write his 300 page biography without a single direct reference to Jesus Christ! I am sure you see the point. Truth does not matter for it does not even exist. All we have left is language. And language refers only to itself. Language games, rhetoric, insights that make sense for you – this is all there is.

The devastating nature of this mindset should be obvious. In the modern world, after the Enlightenment, an unbeliever might present objections to the gospel but these would usually be based on the claim that it was not true. For instance, Marxists held that the view of dialectical materialism of Marx was true, or its adaptation by comrade Lenin was true, and thus Christianity was false. If you were presenting the gospel to a Marxist, you would at least have this in common – that you both agreed it was utterly important that what you believe be objectively true. You disagreed with the other on the grounds that his views were false. What PM is doing is to remove even this measure of agreement. In doing so there appears superficially to be no common point of contact between the gospel and the world of PM.

We shall return to this question of how to present the gospel in the PM world. Before we do so, we must explore further the way it is reshaping our everyday life for by doing this we will be in a better position to ask how we can combat it effectively.

To be continued in the next issue.

References

- 1 See my article 'Is Evangelicalism Christian?' in *Evangelical Quarterly* (1995):3-33.
- 2 Graham Shaw, *God in our hands* (London:SCM, 1987), 15, 31, 47, cited in Anthony C Thiselton, *Interpreting God and the Post-Modern Self: on Meaning, Manipulation, and Promise* (Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1995), 31.

Britain on the Couch:

Why we're unhappier now than we were in the 1950s – despite being richer

Oliver James, Century Press, 402pp.
£16.99.

A review by Sharon James

The popular psychologist, Oliver James, has produced a thought-provoking book which accurately describes the unhappiness experienced by many inhabitants of the most well-off countries today. The basic argument of the book is that we live in an era of unprecedented peace and prosperity. The developed world has been 'transformed by affluence, leisure, and technology'. The assumption of politicians is that improved economic performance leads to increased well-being. On the whole, people in Britain are better off in the 1990s than we were in the 1950s. And yet as a nation we are more depressed. We live in what has been called the 'culture of complaint'. What used to be called the sins of grumbling and complaining are now socially respectable: they have simply been renamed 'demanding my rights'.

James argues that it is no accident that while we are better off, we are also more discontented. For just as material well-being has increased, so has expectation. People's aspirations are

higher than they have ever been. The media constantly portrays successful 'beautiful' people, and this ceaseless exposure makes even 'winners' feel like losers. For most people, between 13% and 19% of all their waking hours are spent in front of the TV (p95). Average daily viewing in Britain is 189 minutes. People tend to compare 'upwards' and always feel dissatisfied that they are not as good-looking, rich, successful or well-educated as the person one notch up the scale. As soon as we get or achieve something we move the goal posts, and aim for the next thing. This is not a happy decade in which to be living, although it is arguably a prosperous one. This epidemic of upward comparison makes even the wealthiest and most glamorous members of society vulnerable to depression, addictive behaviour, eating disorders, and so on. Since 1950 the prevalence of depression, suicide, aggression, impulsive violence, alcohol use and abuse, ecstasy use, bulimia, anorexia, obsessive compulsive disorders, and gambling have risen dramatically (p33). All are merely symptoms of a deep unease and unhappiness. James speaks of 'death by a thousand social comparisons'. He argues that, 'Once nations successfully meet the basic needs of most of their citizens, increased affluence does not mean increased well-being.' Some countries which are less well-off have popula-

tions which experience more well-being (e.g. Ireland, Finland, Australia, compared with UK, USA, Japan).

Rampant aspirations and individualism encourage everyone to think, 'I could be that, do that, achieve that,' etc. For example the British Lottery uses the slogan 'It could be YOU' in the promotional material, ignoring the slight problem that there is only a 1 in 14 million chance that it will be you! (p87).

There is another great cause of depression in today's society, says James. Relationships, primarily marital relationships, used to be more functional. Today, we expect our life partner to fulfil all our emotional and psychological needs, and there is this great expectation of intimacy. But no individual human being can fulfill all the needs of another. Yet, if we are not fulfilled, then we get out. And our attachments are falling apart at a rate greater than at any time in human history. There has been a huge increase in broken emotional bonds since 1950. He says that although there have been no major wars since 1950 we have been losing each other so frequently that, in terms of the emotional effects, it is as if we have been living through a psychological Third World War. 'The increased emotional and physical separation of child from parent, of lover from lover, and of elderly parent from relative is a wail of anguish which crescendoes to the furthest reaches of

our society. ...the epidemic of broken bonds is so damaging because we form more, more intense, intimate relationships than hitherto, only to break them.' (p128) Divorce has many similar psychological consequences to bereavement. Since 1950 there have been approximately two and a half million divorces in Britain.

But what is the answer for the endemic depression in society today? Predictably, as the author is a psychologist, he offers drugs and therapy in the short term. He suggests changes to the advanced capitalistic structure of our society in the long term, saying that we should cooperate rather than compete. Although he is brilliant at describing the symptoms of our malaise, he has missed the spiritual cause, and thus cannot offer an adequate answer.

And this offers yet another opportunity to explain and offer the gospel to those around us. Those living in the developed world are too often discontented 'Wannabes', caught in the vicious circle of upward comparison or trapped in the endless quest for intimacy. But the ultimate answer is not pills, therapy, or increased human cooperation: the only ultimate answer is the Christian gospel, which offers a restored relationship with our Creator. For when we accept the free offer of the gospel, we realise that our worth lies not in what we have, what we've done, or how successful our relationships are: we are of infinite worth because of who made us.

News

Training for Ministry, UK

At the Carey Ministers' Conference in January 1997 there were a number of informal discussions about the possibility of organising Reformed Baptist ministerial training in the UK. This led to a meeting being called by Bob Sheehan in Welwyn at the end of February. Since that time further meetings have been held, and a project named 'Training for Ministry' has taken shape.

This project emphasises the vital role of the local church in the development of leaders for the future. Students are proposed by local churches, and they are based in local church or church-planting situations for the duration of the four year course. The academic studies and practical training of students is overseen by local church leaders (mentors) according to the model of 2 Timothy 2:2. It is expected that full-time students should spend 50% of their time on academic assignments. Once a month, students attend two days of lectures and seminars at a central location. Here intensive academic input is provided.

The academic syllabus includes many of the elements which would be expected of a seminary course, including biblical languages. The objective is to maintain academic standards which are as high as possible within the constraints of the time available. The ethos of the course is to emphasise exegesis, hermeneutics, and biblical theology as the foundations of systematic theology. There is also a special emphasis on practical training for church leadership. The doctrinal basis of the project is that of the International Fellowship of Reformed Baptists (IFRB),

that is the doctrines of grace as expressed in the 1689 Confession.

The project is currently directed by a steering committee: Robin Dowling (chair), Phil Arthur, Simon Bowkett, Gareth Crossley, Ray Evans, Martyn Hallett, Bill James.

It is hoped that 'Training for Ministry' will be able to work together in cooperation with other training institutions where possible. Funding is presently being sought from grant-making bodies. Placements for students are already available and it is anticipated that the course will be under way in the near future. Further details are available from Simon Bowkett, 53 The Street, Cobham, Kent, DA12 3BX, UK.

Breakthrough

Massive demand has led to a second print run of 75,000 of the special '*Breakthrough*' edition of John's Gospel published by Universities & Colleges Christian Fellowship (UCCF). The booklet is packaged to resemble a compact disc. Its design has attracted overwhelmingly positive comment.

Last September UCCF planned to place a Gospel in the hands of every British university and further education college student living in halls of residence with a personal invitation from a Christian Union member on campus to join a small Discovering Christianity group. The Bible Society donated an initial 315,000 Gospels. The second printing brings the number to 390,000. Nigel Lee, head of Student Ministries at UCCF says, 'The

attractive design of the *Breakthrough* Gospel makes it easy for people to take the first step of opening its covers and starting to read. This is the best thing they could possibly do since the gospel is as it has always been: "The power of God for salvation".'

Further information: Norman Fraser, 38 De Montfort St, Leicester LE1 7GP. Tel 0116 255 1700.

St Helena Island, S Pacific Ocean

Operation World reports that there are 16 Anglican churches, 1 Salvation Army, 1 Baptist and 1 'other' on the island and that St Helenan society (population under 10,000) is hedonistic and indifferent to the claims of the gospel.

The one Baptist Church on the island grew encouragingly during the nine-year ministry of Pastor Andrew Coats. For family reasons Andrew, his wife Caryll and their children moved to the UK in 1997.

In mid-January 1998 Pastor Mark Nieuwoudt and his wife Beverly set sail from South Africa to continue the gospel ministry in that remote island. Mark has recently completed theological training having previously worked as youth pastor in Eastside Baptist Church, Windhoek, Namibia with Pastor Joachim Rieck. Prayer is requested for this young couple as they face loneliness and testing – with no airport and the arrival of the mailship only once every six weeks! Surely a situation comparable to that of early missionaries. Why not encourage them with a letter arriving on one of those ships? Address – Box 52, Jamestown, St Helena Island, South Pacific Ocean.

Serbia

Simo Ralevic writes from PEC, KOSOVA, SERBIA, to explain the device of Satan to destroy his work through newspaper reports that attribute suicides to those who have been receiving his gospel literature. This is the gospel of justification by faith, by grace alone which they reject and oppose. Today it is widely understood that suicide takes place through complex mental illness when people are out of control. But where Simo lives and labours there is no recourse to justice like there is in most countries where there is a free press.

I am writing to our brother as follows:

Dear Simo,

Having received your message we will call our RT readers to special prayer on your behalf to our mighty Lord who has all power in earth and heaven. He reigns and will reign until all his enemies are subdued (Psalm 110:1). He reigns, *regnum potentiae* (with power over all civil rulers) and *regnum gratiae* (with the power of gracious intervention to quicken sinners to life). This is clearly set out for us in Psalm 2.

He has the power to over-rule the lies of your enemies, power to show that they have been using propaganda against the gospel – but how can he do this? We simply do not know. But he knows. He is not defeated or confused. He has the wisdom to know the best way to vindicate you. He has the power to intervene. Time and time again he has come to rescue his work and we are pleading with him to do this for you and your work in Serbia.

Yours in our Saviour, *Erroll Hulse*

The Cross He Bore

Meditations on the Sufferings of the Redeemer

Frederick S Leahy, Banner of Truth, Edinburgh, 1996, pbk 82pages, £3.50

a review by Tom Wells

Every Christian, as Paul reminds us in Philippians 4:8, has to think about what he is to think about. Thoughts come to the mind imperiously, but some must be resisted and others cultivated. 'Whatever is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable . . . if anything is excellent or praiseworthy . . . think about such things.' This simple rule is itself praiseworthy, coming as it does from the mind of the Spirit of God.

Frederick Leahy has written this short book to help us to mind this rule. Its subtitle, 'Meditations on the Sufferings of the Redeemer', describes it exactly. The fearsome-sounding word 'meditations' means some things to think about. Among such things, the sorrows and sufferings of Christ that overtook him at the end of his life stand high on the list. Professor Leahy divides the sufferings of Christ, starting in Gethsemane and running through the cross, into 13 pungent mini-essays requiring only a few minutes each to read. The language is simple, but the content stimulates further thought. Exactly what we need! The reader could take one as a tonic each morning or evening and profit greatly.

There is a good deal to encourage one here. To begin with, unlike much 'devotional' literature, this little work is founded on penetrating study of the text of Scripture. The author does not parade his scholarship, but it is evident in the accuracy with which he writes about our Saviour and in the copious illustrations that he takes from his own extensive reading. The book abounds in good things taken from others. On the life of Jesus Leahy quotes R W Dale: 'The real truth is that while he came to preach the Gospel, his chief object in coming was that there might be a Gospel to preach.' Consider this pithy saying of Samuel Rutherford: 'The worst things of Christ, his reproaches, his cross, are better than Egypt's treasures.' And catch the love for the Saviour in the saying of Rabbi Duncan in contemplating arriving in heaven: 'First I shall look for the face of my Lord, and then I shall enquire for the angel that came to help my Lord in the hour of his agony in Gethsemane.' It's easy to wish that I had first thought of that!

The vitality of any book, of course, is the contribution of the author himself and here Leahy shines. Writing on that same angel of mercy he says, 'Whatever comfort the angel brought the Saviour was transient. The angel's mission was not to bring relief to Christ, but to strengthen him for further and

even greater anguish . . . anguish quite beyond human endurance. The angel's presence served to aggravate his suffering. It was in order that the suffering might not only be maintained, but also that it might be intensified that the angel was sent. The battle must go on. It was too soon to say "Finished". The Lamb of God must have the strength of a lion in this struggle.'

In this little book we meet the basic themes connected with the sufferings and death of our Saviour. Here, for example, is Leahy on the plan of God amid the connivings of men: 'God would have his Son die for his people so that they might live; Caiaphas would have Christ die in order to be rid of him. . . . Thus predestination and human responsibility meet as Christ is condemned. He was "delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God" yet "crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men" (Acts 2:23). God's eternal purpose was realized in the death of his Son.'

Consider this fine passage on the supernatural darkness at the crucifixion: *'The darkness at Calvary is also a reminder of creation's "sympathy" with its Lord.* It was fitting that the sun should be darkened when the Creator went to the cross, there to suffer in his human nature. Creation, in every atom and cell, is totally dependent on Christ for its existence. "He is before all things, and in him all things hold together"

(Col 1:17). He is the Sustainer as well as the Creator of the universe. Scripture stresses the sympathy that exists between Christ and the world of nature. . . .'

In an epilogue Leahy makes the following point: 'The proud, self-sufficient, modern humanist despises the whole idea of forgiveness. Like the blustering W E Henley, he sees himself as master of his fate and captain of his soul. "Forgiveness", said George Bernard Shaw, "is a beggar's refuge. We must pay our debts." About the time of Luther's death, a piece of paper was found in his pocket on which he had written in Latin and German, "*Hoc est verum. Wir sind alle Bettler*" (This is true. We are all beggars). There is the contrast between the stony heart of unbelief and the heart of flesh that weeps for sin and looks in faith to the crucified and risen Saviour for mercy.'

Whoever picks up this little book and reads it through will come away with great profit to his or her soul. The book could be read through in an evening, but perhaps it would be best to take it in the five to ten minute segments it offers the reader. There is much that is true and noble and right and pure and excellent here. Professor Leahy is a boatman who has stayed within the banks of Holy Scripture to give us a journey both lovely and profitable. You are a wise man or woman if you join him on board.

The Theological Renewal 1950-2000

Editor

As we approach the end of a century and the end of a millennium there will be assessments and reviews of many kinds. As far as theology is concerned I would suggest that the last half of the 20th century represents the greatest renewal in theology in England since the 17th-century Puritans. This renewal has a parallel in the USA, in the Spanish and Portuguese speaking worlds and in several nations like Zambia and South Africa. But my purpose here is to sketch out the renewal as it has taken place in England.

The greatest theological renewal since the Puritans? Is this an over-statement? To substantiate the claim we need first to look at the criteria upon which it is based. Secondly we need to look back and test this claim in the light of previous Church history in England.

The first criterion is the witness of literature

We can say without fear of contradiction that the number of Puritan and Reformed titles at present in print exceeds anything known in previous periods with the exception of the apex of the Puritan epoch 1640 -1662 and up until about 1680 when the ejected Puritans edited and published their sermons. During the nineteenth century sets of complete works were published: the writings of John Owen, Thomas Goodwin, Richard Sibbes, George Swinnock, Thomas Brooks and others. But this did not result in an upgrade in theology or stir the churches to rethink and re-assess doctrine. It was an academic exercise, a provision of reference books for libraries. In any case the number of books published does not in itself prove much.

When Thomas Watson's *Body of Divinity* was republished by the Banner of Truth in 1958, a sample was taken to the largest Christian bookshop in the West End of London. The manager at that time assured me that that kind of Puritan book would not sell. It was difficult to persuade him to take six copies. Three days later he telephoned for 12 and a few days later ordered 24 more. Such was the lack of doctrinal books at that time that a vacuum had resulted. Suddenly the value of Puritan books was discovered by a new generation. That

edition of Watson's *Body of Divinity* sold well. The book was popular enough to require it to be reset in a more attractive print and published again in 1965 with subsequent editions thereafter. The decision by the Banner of Truth to publish the Puritan writings in popular paperback form was successful and was widely instrumental in bringing about change. An experience of a Baptist minister in South Africa (Tommy Wilson, now deceased) illustrates the effectiveness of these books. The same day that he received a gift pack through the post of Banner of Truth paperbacks (*The Sovereignty of God* by A W Pink, *The Mystery of Providence* by John Flavel, *The Forgotten Spurgeon* by Iain Murray) he went down with flu. He spent a week in bed and in that time read systematically through these books. He testified afterwards that he went down an Arminian and rose a Calvinist! He also testified to the author of this article that he was determined to make up for the years 'the locusts had eaten' through shallow teaching, a resolution that God honoured.

To illustrate the impact made during the 1960s I refer to my book *Billy Graham – The Pastor's Dilemma*. Arminianism prevailed. This was seen especially in the complete dominance of Billy Graham. It was unthinkable that anyone should question Graham's theology. No publisher would look at anything so preposterous. A publisher had to be created to publish *Billy Graham – The Pastor's Dilemma*. A sympathetic business man (Maurice Wheatley) set up a company with the knowledge that that one title was the only one he would publish, which turned out to be the case. Even though shops refused to stock such a book 20,000 were sold directly or 'under the counter'. 44 papers reviewed this little book including the secular paper *The Daily Telegraph*. Some reviews were dismissive but most were serious. While disagreeing with the theology of the author it is significant that most recognised that an appraisal was necessary. The idea spread that we could and should analyse the theology and methods of Billy Graham. That in itself was a gain. Some of the issues can be summed up as follows:

1. We believe wholeheartedly in evangelism and believe that defective evangelism is better than no evangelism.
2. Billy Graham is truly esteemed for his integrity, zeal and vigorous preaching but we draw back at his cooperation with Liberals and Roman Catholics (Gal 1).
3. The Invitation System is based on Pelagian thinking, subverts the truth of divine regeneration and is unbiblical, misleading and confusing.¹

The principal concern in the dilemma was that Arminianism is a deviation from historic Christianity. Arminianism is a form of simple human reasoning imposed upon Scripture, reasoning which confuses free will with human

responsibility. The human reasoning involved in Arminianism leads very soon to Liberalism which is also the child of human reason. The cooperation of Billy Graham with Liberals and Roman Catholics is expressive of low values laid on biblical truth. There is a wide and easy bridge from Arminianism to liberal thinking and ecumenism.

The steady work of theological renewal I believe has been achieved mostly by commentaries on Scripture. Pastors week by week have to prepare exposition and if they are faithful preachers they must exegete the text. The commentaries by William Hendriksen in particular have been widely distributed and extremely influential. The front cover of *Grace* magazine for January 1998 carries a random picture of a typical section of a typical pastor's library. It is truly typical not only of innumerable pastors' libraries in England but of many in other countries as well. In the picture 54 volumes can be seen. I will comment on some of these as they illustrate my theme. There are eight New Testament commentaries by William Hendriksen and seven by John Calvin plus two volumes of his systematic theology (*The Institutes*). There is a complete set of six volumes of the works of the Puritan Thomas Brooks, six volumes of biography and books on revival, Spurgeon's *Lectures to my Students*, Robert Haldane on *Romans* (the book which had the most effect on me personally to convince me of the Reformed faith), Watson's *Complete Body of Divinity* in three volumes and A A Hodge's *Commentary on the Westminster Confession of Faith*. This is a random sample. Nearly all the above titles are from the Banner of Truth which led the way in England in republishing the Puritan writings and books in the Puritan tradition. Especially effective were *The Life of George Whitefield* in two volumes by Arnold Dallimore, the republication of Spurgeon's sermons, and the brilliantly edited autobiography of Spurgeon in two volumes.

The demand for the Second London Baptist Confession of Faith popularly known as the 1689 Confession confirms the increasing interest in Puritan doctrine. Different editions have been published but none so popular as the one titled *A Faith to Confess* which is a transposition of the 1689 Confession into contemporary English. The eighth edition was published in 1997, these being large runs of between 7,000 and 10,000 copies.

The second criterion is actual practical reformation

How many churches have been affected by this theological renewal? The answer is reflected in the support given to the principal Reformed Conferences. The Leicester Conference for Ministers was born out of the Banner of Truth in

1962 and has grown from about 40 delegates to be the principal Reformed Conference in Britain with around 300 ministers gathering annually. The Puritan Conference began in 1950 and grew gradually to its present proportion of about 220 attendees annually. In 1970 the name was changed to 'Westminster Conference', a conference specialising in history and biography which has contributed in a unique way to the theological renewal. The Carey Conference commenced in 1970. The purpose initially was to apply Reformed doctrine to local Baptist church practice but subsequently the interest has broadened to exploring and developing our Reformed and Baptist legacies in all departments of experience and practice.

Ten years ago the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches (FIEC) faced the fact that its annual conference catering for whole church groups would either grow or die. The choice was to expand. From a base of 500 the annual attendance has risen to over 3,000. This growth is attributed to a high standard of Bible teaching. The gathering is organised by men of Reformed conviction who have never yielded to the spiritual muddle of many charismatic conferences. The Evangelical Movement of Wales Conference held annually in Aberystwyth is supported by about 1,200. Again the organisers are men of Reformed persuasion. Added to these are the efforts of strictly independent churches like Spurgeon's Tabernacle. That church was close to extinction but has been built up by Peter Masters who also organises a Summer School of Theology attended by 500.

The proportion of those who care about theology now is significantly higher than it was in the pre-1950 era. There will always be a sector that is content with traditional beliefs, values and practices. Sadly there will always be ministers who do not sustain well prepared expository preaching. Rather they are content to maintain the *status quo*, keeping to simplistic, traditional theology. Too often this is encouraged by congregations that prefer not to be challenged in the way they think about God and salvation. There is a natural resistance to reformation just as there is to conversion which highlights the necessity of the work of the Holy Spirit (John 16:8). It takes great spiritual power, wisdom, determination and patience to effect a theological reformation. Pastors risk rejection and dismissal by attempting reform.

Before the theological renewal of our generation, as we have already seen, Arminianism was overwhelmingly prevalent. Salvation was ascribed to free will. That was unquestioned. Sanctification teaching was Pelagian, mirrored in Keswick holiness teaching. A major shift has taken place. I am not suggesting that there are no Arminians left. The fact is that whereas 50 years ago it was very difficult to find Reformed preaching in England that is no longer the case.

To illustrate this I refer to a recent informal gathering of about 30 evangelical leaders from across the spectrum of British Evangelicalism. Arminianism was not an issue. The major divide in British Evangelicalism today is not understanding the relationship of free will, human responsibility and the sovereignty of God, but the place of charismatic experience. Now the principal concern is whether Christianity is to be controlled and tested by the Bible or whether it is a matter of subjective experience.

The impact of the theological renewal has been mostly among Baptists. At one stage it seemed that through the ministry of J I Packer, the rediscovery of the Puritans would make an impact within Anglicanism. But in 1977 when the Anglican Evangelicals met in Nottingham (about 2,000 attended – their largest ever gathering), it was evident that there was no place on the agenda for Reformed teaching or for Puritanism. David Watson's charismatic agenda prevailed. I well remember him declaring in a key address, "The Reformation was one of the greatest tragedies that ever happened to the Church!" High on the agenda at that congress was the subject of the new hermeneutic. Most did not know what that was. A joke went round that it could be a reference to a German theologian, Prof Herman Neutic! This issue has proved the undoing of the C of E because the new hermeneutic is used as a human device whereby Scripture can be made to say the exact opposite of what it clearly states.

An historical survey

Since the Puritans of the 17th century and the Confessions of Faith (Westminster and 1689 London Baptist Confession) theology in England has mostly been taken for granted. It was not something new to be hammered out on an anvil. Scotland is different. Scotland was endowed with the legacy of Reformed theology. Scottish theologians reviewed and developed Reformed theology. We see this illustrated in the last century in the works of theologians such as Thomas Chalmers, William Cunningham, James Bannerman, George Smeaton and James Buchanan.

The last time Baptists experienced something of a theological renewal was through the ministry of Andrew Fuller (1754-1815). He was the principal writer but there were others like John Sutcliff (1752-1814). *The Complete Works of Andrew Fuller* in three volumes adding up to a total of 2,416 pages were published by Sprinkle Publications, Harrisonburg, VA, USA in 1988 with a 12 page introduction by Prof Tom Nettles. The complete works of John Sutcliff are summarised by Prof Michael Haykin in his *One Heart and One Soul – John Sutcliff of Olney, his friends and his times*.² This theological

renewal was related to the missionary awakening in which William Carey played a foremost role, an enterprise which captured the imagination of the Evangelical world, sparked the formation of many missionary societies and initiated what has been termed the 'Modern Missionary Movement'.

This theological renewal kindled by Andrew Fuller was also closely related to the Concert of Prayer for Revival which came with the publication of Jonathan Edwards' book calling for special prayer for revival. John Erskine (1721-1803), a Presbyterian minister in Scotland, sent a copy to John Ryland Jr (1753-1825) who shared its vision with the circle of theologically renewed friends and this in turn became part of the Second Great Spiritual Awakening (1792-1830) usually referred to as 'The Forgotten Revival'. This was a revival more extensive than the First Great Awakening (from about 1735 onwards) associated with George Whitefield, the Wesley brothers and the Methodists. It is estimated that ten percent of the population of England was added to the membership of non-conformist churches in the period from about 1792-1830.

Besides Andrew Fuller and John Sutcliff there were other influential writers such as Abraham Booth (1734-1806) and to a lesser extent the editor of *The Annual Register*, John Rippon (1750-1836). Yet it was Andrew Fuller who grappled with and tackled the core issue. The theological renewal began when Fuller challenged the presuppositions of hyper-Calvinism. This he did in his treatise *The Gospel Worthy of all Acceptation or the Duty of Sinners to Believe in Jesus Christ*, first published in 1785 and which led ultimately to the formation of the Baptist Missionary Society. That was the work with a cutting edge. It impacted the Particular Baptist churches. The treatise was used to rescue many of them from the slough of hyper-Calvinism. It was a time of acute self-conscious re-appraisal. But in terms of a comprehensive overhaul of Reformed theology as a whole, that period of rethinking does not compare with the theological renewal of our generation which can be assessed by reading the journals and books of this period which is made easier through the electronic revolution. For example Michael Keen of Aberystwyth, Wales, has compiled indices on a disk for the *Banner of Truth* magazine from its inception in 1955, *Reformation Today* from its inception in 1970, and the annual *Puritan and Westminster Conference Papers* from 1956 to the present, a resource which Mr Keen constantly updates.³

At the commencement of his ministry in London, Spurgeon republished *The 1689 Confession of Faith*. In this way he owned the inheritance of the Puritans. When the Downgrade controversy (1887-1892) broke, Spurgeon found himself isolated. Only a tiny minority sided with him and that in a defensive

posture. This was a time of demise for theology, not renewal. A cold, dark, long night followed. We look in vain for a clarion voice. In the 1940s and 1950s there was the lonely witness of A W Pink who concluded his life with a writing ministry on the remote wind-blown shores of the Island of Lewis in North West Scotland. His magazine with a small circulation was titled *Studies in the Scriptures*. Calvinism in those years was represented by the Sovereign Grace Union, a fringe organisation with little credibility. Bedevilled with hyper-Calvinism the SGU was rather like a bird trying to fly with lead wings. Among the Baptists, Calvinism was represented by Strict and Particular Baptist churches. These were regarded by mainstream Arminian Evangelicalism as out of touch and irrelevant.

John Owen's 24 volume *Works* (1616-1683) is the greatest resource of theology in the English language. As a first year student at Oxford in 1944 Jim Packer was appointed a junior librarian to assess and house a Puritan library that had been donated to OICCU (Oxford Inter-Collegiate Christian Union). It was then he discovered the 24 volume set of John Owen. The pages were uncut. The contents were summarised on the spines. In order to read about mortification of sin Packer first cut his way into volume six. That was his rediscovery of the Puritans. Later he wrote a doctoral thesis on Richard Baxter. In due course Packer's contribution toward a revival of interest in the Puritans was immense. Packer's book *Evangelism and The Sovereignty of God* (which, with Iain Murray's *The Forgotten Spurgeon* and *Spurgeon versus Hyper-Calvinism*, should be mandatory reading for every person tempted with hyper-Calvinism) is typical of his timely contributions. In the early 1950s the Evangelical Library in London began to exercise an extensive influence encouraged by Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones whose preaching ministry at Westminster Chapel was at its apex in those years. In 1957 the Banner of Truth had its genesis in the same building.

Of course there are dangers in any period of theological renewal. If doctrine is not applied sterility follows. In 1960 Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones 'preached' a paper with the title '*Knowledge – False and True*' based on 1 Corinthians 8:1-3. In this he sounded a warning against a purely academic or intellectual approach to truth. Typically of the physician he spelled out the symptoms: pride, impatience with any opposing views – 'no opposing view has a right to exist', and isolation from the world because of a total preoccupation with books and reading. Theological renewal is not designed to make the orthodox superior to others. Doctrine on its own soon turns into hyper-orthodoxy which breeds censoriousness like that of the Pharisees of Jesus' day. Hyper-orthodoxy also tends to foster authoritarianism and a rigid separatism. Some who designate themselves 'Reformed' are in danger of going down in history

as fundamentalists. They are fundamentalist in the sense of aggressive and separatist attitudes and contention for secondary issues. The Puritans were generous to each other, evangelistically-minded toward the world and pastorally concerned for the whole body of Christ rather than their own party. Hyper-orthodoxy breeds hard-hearted attitudes and Spartan churches in which absolute conformity is mandatory with no room for questions and certainly no room for weak believers. By way of contrast the Puritans delighted in expounding and applying verses such as 'A bruised reed he will not break and a smouldering wick he will not snuff out' (Is 42:3), and 'He tends his flock like a shepherd: he gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart, and gently leads those that have young' (Is 40:11).

We have been blessed with a comprehensive, widespread theological renewal. The Puritan age which had its roots in the time of Queen Elizabeth I (r.1558-1603) and reached its zenith between 1603 and 1662 and beyond, ran into the sands of Rationalism and Unitarianism. Will the theological renewal in England, which has had its roots in the time of Elizabeth II, r.1952 onwards, continue to grow and continue to be transposed to other languages and nations? Will it lead to more bold missionary enterprise? Will it generate a vibrant evangelistic thrust which communicates the gospel to a post-modern Western society? Will it generate a Concert of Prayer and eventuate in a spiritual awakening similar to that of 1792 -1830? Will theological renewal be engendered in nations emerging for the first time with large Christian denominations? Chapel Library in Pensacola, Florida, is an outstanding agency which promotes Puritan literature in several languages in many nations. Psalm 72 is a model prayer which reminds us that we are to intercede always that the whole earth be filled with his glory. In Psalm 72 the Hebrew verbs are in the optative (that is in the form of desire summed up in the simple word *may*, – 'may the earth be filled with righteousness'). But in the case of the prophet Habakkuk the Lord's promise is not an optative but an indicative future, in the form of an affirmation and promise, 'For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea' (Hab 2:14).

References

- 1 For a full exposition of Gospel invitations and discussion of the issues including a response to R T Kendall see *The Great Invitation*, Erroll Hulse, 184 pages, EP, 1986.
- 2 Michael Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul*, 430 pages, EP, 1994.
- 3 Michael Keen, the cost of the disk including postage is £1.40. Address: 5 Penygraig, ABERYSTWYTH, Dyfed, SY23 2JA, UK. These indices represent a vast work achieved to make less work for others. When in printed form this resource will add up to about 240 pages paperback.

David T Jones (1931-1997)

by Phil Arthur

On Wednesday November 12th 1997 a packed congregation gathered in Sunderland Free Church to pay tribute to the memory of David Jones, who passed into the presence of his Lord the previous week after a lengthy illness.

Sunderland was the scene of his most productive years. He came to Wearside in 1965 after training at the old Glasgow Bible Training Institute and two pastorates in Scotland, each of four and a half years, first at Clarkston Baptist Church in Glasgow and then at Gorgie Baptist Church in Edinburgh. When he arrived in Sunderland in the mid sixties, it could still boast that it was the largest ship-building town in the world with both banks of the River Wear lined with shipyards. The town was surrounded by mining communities. By the time of his death, though Sunderland had been made a city, not one shipyard had survived and not one working colliery could be found in County Durham. During this period of transition, David Jones spent himself in the service of his adopted home and became one of the characters of the town, instantly recognisable in his distinctive raincoat and trilby hat as he walked along the beaches at Roker and Seaburn or as he followed his



David T Jones

punishing schedule of visits to the General Hospital and the Royal Infirmary. His stride was brisk, his bearing erect, his handshake firm and manly. He greeted strangers and friends alike with all the enthusiasm of a man meeting a long-lost brother.

He was a good example of the value of a godly home. Born in Filey, he was the son of Rev Tom Jones, a noted evangelist who conducted evangelistic campaigns with unflagging zeal for several decades. This meant that the young David grew up in an atmosphere of holy seriousness which was never to leave him. Until he left Filey at the age of nine, his grandfather took him to every funeral in the town, which may help to explain why the weight of eternity and the welfare of human

souls were never far from his thoughts. His teenage years were spent in Beeston, near Nottingham, where his father planted what was to become Beeston Free Church. He became Sunday School Superintendent there at fifteen and led the work among young people. Steeped as he was in church life and evangelistic endeavour from his childhood upwards, he became a gifted all-rounder. His pastorates were marked by untiring labour not only in the pulpit, but as an indefatigable visitor, a zealous correspondent and a generous helper to those in need.

I first came under his influence as a boy of fourteen when I began to attend Bethesda Free Church where he had been pastor for a little over a year. Certainly it was his voice which taught me to tremble at the Word of God. He was to baptise me and, in due course, bury my father. With the passage of time, I learned to appreciate another dimension of his ministry, for he was a representative not merely of evangelical Christianity, but of that tough-minded, disciplined and God-honouring brand of Christianity known as the Reformed faith. The theology and piety of the Reformers and Puritans began to live for me while I was a student at Cambridge and upon my return I became aware as I had not previously been that this was ground where my pastor had raised his standard. He had always been attracted to the teaching which

magnified the sovereignty of God, but his views gained added clarity and his stand became increasingly uncompromising during the sixties and seventies, chiefly through two influences. One of these was the pioneer work of the Banner of Truth Trust in making the literature of earlier generations available once again after a period of several decades when the writings of the Puritans and their successors like Edwards and Spurgeon had only been available second-hand. David Jones read voraciously. Spurgeon in particular became a constant companion. The other great influence was largely personal. Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones was present at his induction to the pastorate at Bethesda and became a valued friend and counsellor. The contact was kept up through regular visits to the Puritan and then the Westminster Conferences and he was able to persuade the 'Doctor' to preach in Sunderland now and again. (I well remember the occasion, late in 1975, when the little Welshman preached to over 600 people, holding this large congregation spellbound for an hour and twenty minutes on 1 Corinthians 3:11, 'For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.')

David Jones never tired of acknowledging his debt to the 'Doctor' and when the 'Banner' began to make his sermons on Romans available, he passed them on as gifts to a wide circle. Like his mentor, he was

committed to the systematic exposition of whole books of Scripture. On reflection, his series could sometimes be over long, but there were also times when a rare unction clung to his sermons. Series in 1 & 2 Peter and Ephesians were particularly memorable. He always seemed to cherish the conviction that no situation was so intractable that a sermon, delivered with divine anointing, would not put all to rights. Some modern pastors imitate game show hosts in their breezy mateyness, but David Jones always conducted services with the air of a man who believed himself to be under the scrutiny of heaven. His motto was 'no flourishes'.

At one period in his ministry, he had to face the taunt that Calvinism kills evangelism. His example proved the opposite. I have never met a more zealous soul-winner. He was ready to tackle anybody about his eternal destiny. I used to spend my summers as a student working as a bin man. One particular week I was part of the crew which emptied the chapel bins for Bethesda. The ladies' meeting was emptying just as I shouldered the bin. The chorus of greetings brought the pastor out and he spoke to every member of the crew about eternity. After conducting my father's funeral, he sat in the front of the funeral car. All the way to the cemetery, I could hear him through the glass partition witnessing to the driver. No-one was immune. Like John Knox, he did not seem nervous of anyone: his fellow

passengers in the compartment of a train, patients in the local hospital, chance acquaintances: all would be met with a winsome smile and the question, 'Do you love the Lord?' He loved cricket and watched the Test match against Australia when Geoffrey Boycott scored his hundredth century. At one point in the interview, Boycott let slip a blasphemy. Without further ado, David Jones despatched him a book and an earnest letter.

His book ministry was a remarkable feature of his service for God. He was convinced that worthwhile Christian books can change lives and gave them away with liberal abandon. When speaking at Christian Unions he would take a box or two in the boot of his car. Many a fledgling preacher would receive a well-chosen volume at regular intervals. He sent a copy of Lloyd-Jones on Atonement and Justification to the present Pope. (I saw the reply on Vatican headed note-paper). Even though his strength was waning, after the British General Election in May, he sent a volume to the new Prime Minister, Tony Blair. His promotion to glory means that life at the distribution department of the 'Banner' has slowed down!

He was to pay a heavy price for his stand for the Reformed faith. At that time, he was one of the few champions of evangelical Calvinism in the northeast of England and his views were misunderstood and mis-



Training for Ministry, UK, see News. From left to right: Simon Bowkett, Gareth Crossley, Phil Arthur, Robin Dowling, Ray Evans and Bill James

represented. He stood for the primacy of the local church in evangelism and his long experience led him to question the value of campaign-style evangelism, especially when allied to the invitation system. His first church in Sunderland was surrounded by a number of Mission Halls, none of which, in all their long history, had ever quite become local churches in their own right, even though there is reason to think that the founding generation had this in mind from the outset. David Jones' concern to see these missions become flourishing independent churches, while linked by bonds of fellowship and prayer to the mother church, sparked the accusation that he wanted to split the church. This led to a confusing chain of events which resulted in his dismissal. In the months which preceded it, surprising depths of resistance emerged to a

Reformed ministry in a church which had never shaken off the nineteenth-century enthusiasms of old-style Keswick teaching and Premillennialism. The result was the planting of a new church, explicitly Reformed and Baptist, Sunderland Free Church, which he served as pastor for ten years until 1985.

Now that he has gone to his reward, I cherish the memory of a zealous servant of Christ who was able to combine evangelistic drive with a demanding pulpit ministry. He leaves his widow, Ann, still living in Sunderland, his son Timothy and his daughters, Bethan and Sarah. Each of the children are married, with families of their own. Readers of *RT* are encouraged to pray for them all as they continue to come to terms with a great loss.

Carey Ministers' Conference 1998

*Report by David Earl, assistant pastor,
Woodstock Road Baptist Church,
Oxford.*

Wednesday afternoon, 7 January and 113 brown envelopes are spread on the reception desk at the Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, each with the name boldly displayed.

It's my first time, but I know a few other pastors and within minutes know a few more. Erroll Hulse's introductory remark is reassuring in both its sentiments: 'At this conference we accept each other from whatever Bible-believing background, and also hope that those who are not Reformed Baptists will soon become so!' (If you have met him, you can imagine the big warm smile at this point!). The warm acceptance and the historical-faith emphasis were indeed both evident throughout this 48 hour conference.

The first session: Geoff Thomas on 'George Whitefield the Preacher'. Sure, it's familiar territory to most of us, but this was not mere regurgitation of biography. Analysis pervaded from the very beginning. For example the key role of Puritan books in Whitefield's conversion and development, and how he gave copies to so many folk during his lifetime. Such was Pastor Thomas' passion in the presentation that it was like being in that extraordinary revival that surrounded Whitefield all his life. It left me refreshed and grateful already for coming to Carey.



John Campbell

Next came the challenge: Martin Holdt on 'Preparing to Preach'. All of us, young or old, should aim to improve (Prov 4:18). With 2 Timothy 2:15 as the text, we were urged not to be guilty of the sin of omission in our sermon preparation and study of Scripture. It will always take time to prepare. It will always take time to be holy. There's no other way even when you're 60 plus.

The following evening Martin Holdt preached again, this time on 'Unction in Preaching'. A theology of 'unction' is based on two passages: 1 Corinthians 2:3-5, where Paul depended on the Holy Spirit and not on human cleverness, and Ephesians 6:19 where Paul requested prayer for 'words' to be given him. Since the apostle never lacked for words and knew the truth so well, he must have been asking for

something more here. 'Unction' is liberty, thoughts queuing up – we know when we have it, or at least the hearers do. It is never deserved, but we and the congregations we serve should pray much for it, for with it comes great blessing. Two phrases stood out: 'Consistent unction is accompanied by consistent godliness' and 'There will never be unction unless we determine to exalt Jesus Christ every time we preach.' For me and all I spoke with afterwards this remained a most moving occasion; the speaker had demonstrated his message, leaving our hearts stirred and minds re-focused. Rarely do I buy cassettes, but here was an exception.

On the way to the pre-breakfast prayer meeting I noticed at least a dozen envelopes still on the desk, all marked DV – *must* mean 'Day Visitor' and not the room number? Anyway I don't think anyone had to share a room, certainly not a dozen to one!

That morning Gaius Davies gave the first of two sessions on 'Counselling the Afflicted'. He used these to lead us gently through some important features of a subject he suspects many at the conference would treat with great caution. But his frequent references to Bunyan, Newton, Cowper and Lloyd-Jones no doubt assured many. He recommended that we should be like cameras, focusing accurately on the one seeking help, having a sensitive film (we can and should all become more sensitive), and then developing the film with a good understanding of the issues and of theology. He quoted movingly from Amy Carmichael's poem, 'Hast

thou no scars?', and urged us to be gentle by remembering when we have felt hurt.

In his second talk on the same subject, Dr Davies urged us to avoid having needy folk becoming dependent on our consciences. They are not our 'patients' and others in the church can help too, though having been enrolled on a counselling training course does not ensure competence. And what type of counselling? Well, cognitive behavioural therapy is good to teach people to catch their 'automatic negative thoughts' (ANT) which can lead to depression or worse, and instead think realistically about events in their lives according to scriptural principles. Under professional care, the use of medication for the mentally ill should not be dismissed. The session ended with a few words on, 'Who cares for the carer?' There are dangers in becoming focused only on our work. . . . We should remember that God is Lord of salvation and creation; we can benefit from the beauty of his world as well as the truth of his Word. Burn out? Rust away? Better keep well-oiled! In thanking Gaius Davies, Erroll said, 'You have been like the warm and gentle sunshine to us in this conference; we need that. We also need the thunderstorm of Martin Holdt bringing rain. So thank you both.'

The pre-lunch sessions on Thursday and Friday were for our Australian visitor, John Campbell. In his first, 'The Lost Jewel – Worship', he avoided, somewhat disappointingly, the more controversial aspects. But the reminder that 'worship is vertical' was most important. It is not there to make us feel better. 'We don't want seeker-sensitive

worship for unbelievers because no-one seeks after God anyway.' In opening up Isaiah he gave us a 'dialogical' model he uses in Brisbane. It starts with the revelation from God ('I saw the Lord sitting on a throne') to which we respond with adoration ('Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts') and confession. God grants expiation ('Your iniquity is taken away'). Proclamation of God's Word now follows, again with appropriate response ('Here am I! Send me'). Finally we have commission and supplication.

In the final session of the conference, John Campbell's theme was, 'Suffering in the book of Job'. From the outset he related it to us as ministers. An openness about some of the struggles he himself has gone through reassured us that he was speaking from the heart. His headings spoke for themselves: 'A sad scene' . . . how much pastors often face; 'A little window' . . . there is more than we perceive going on, and we, not Job, are granted insight; 'The big picture' . . . God himself who is too wise to make mistakes, too powerful to fail and too loving to be cruel'; 'The long view' . . . glory always overtakes suffering.

But the Carey Conference is not just about sessions. There is warm fellowship, the opportunity to meet new folk and those you've only heard of before, and times of prayer together. Thursday afternoon was when those from overseas were able to share their situations with us all. There was David Zadok from Israel who told us of God's blessing on the 'Grace and Truth' Church. Building plans are under way because 280 people need a bigger place



than the one designed for 55! They publish books in Hebrew like an illustrated church history. Two students from the *European Missionary Fellowship* college, Manuel Lopez Franco and Rogerio Ramos spoke on the potential in Spain and Portugal respectively for gospel work. Two brothers from the Netherlands spoke of the *Whitefield Fellowship* translating and distributing Reformed literature. Percy Chisenga from Zambia told us of church planting work there. Our vision was broadened and we were encouraged that the gospel is bearing fruit throughout God's world.

As we departed we sensed that God himself had met with us at Carey; we went enlivened and eager to serve him. As I hung the key to my room at the reception desk, the whole rack fell down. At least it confirmed that Hayes has rooms 1 to 99 and A to Z, but not DV. So plenty of space for next year; see you then, DV.

When Heaven Touched Earth

Roy J Fish, 338 page hardback, details from Need of the Times Publishers, Box 458, Azle, Texas 76098, USA

a review by the editor

Since Pentecost, which was a unique historical event, there have been outpourings of the Holy Spirit at many times, in a wide variety of places and on each occasion with varying characteristics. *When Heaven Touched Earth* is a well-documented, easy to read, fascinating description of the Prayer Revival of 1858 in America when about one million converts were added to the churches in the United States.

This masterly work begins with a description of the economic, social and religious condition of the nation from 1840 to 1858. Unfolded thereafter is the story of a revival which reminds us of the waters of Ezekiel 47: a trickle, a stream, a river, then a mighty torrent of living waters bringing healing to the nations. It is thrilling to read the description of Jeremiah Lanphier, a humble lay city missionary to office workers, who initiated a prayer meeting which began with six. The next week there were 20 and six months later in New

York city alone as many as 50,000 were attending daily lunch time prayer meetings.

The minister at Fulton Street was the famous J W Alexander whose five page tract *Pray for the Spirit* is included (page 325ff).

Toward the end of his life, which he devoted to the study of revivals, Edwin Orr suggested that the 1857-58 revival was the most wholesome movement ever known in the Christian Church. *When Heaven Touched Earth* should be read alongside Iain Murray's *Revival and Revivalism* (451 pages, hardback, Banner of Truth 1994, see review RT141).

This beautifully presented account should:

1. Revive and warm your heart.
2. Convince you of the reality of revival.
3. Give you a great longing to experience revival.
4. Persuade you that heaven-sent intercession precedes heaven-sent revival.
5. Give you a desire to pray that way yourself and encourage that in your church.
6. Instruct you in an important phase of American Church history.

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