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Cessationists are Completists!

Editorial

Restorationism represents the greatest challenge there is to the Reformed tradition. If the future of gospel testimony in the world depends on the restoration of apostles and supernatural wonders then, in ignoring such claims, we have missed the way.

The Reformed view, however, can be summed up by a text of Scripture, namely, *In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son* (Heb 1:1,2). The principle underlying the Reformed position is Biblical Theology which means that God works progressively through history and does not repeat himself. First there was the patriarchal period, then followed Moses and the law, the era of the prophets, the inter-testamental period, and finally the advent of Christ and his apostles in which the foundations were laid for the ongoing Church which will continue until the Lord returns. The Holy Spirit is given to the Church. The Word of God is complete. We have everything we need to fulfil the great commission to disciple all the nations of the world.

Pentecostal denominations which have arisen this century are wholeheartedly committed to the great commission. Often they evangelise better and grow faster than do those in the Reformed tradition. The Pentecostal view is that while we are equipped with the Word we should nevertheless seek the continuation of the charismatic gifts. The Restoration Movement in Britain is a relatively new grouping which has divided into two parts. Dr Andrew Walker has this year provided us with an update of the history of the two sections R1 and R2.¹ As the name suggests, the Restoration Movement aims to restore apostolic Christianity on the basis of Ephesians 4:11-13. The idea is that by restoring apostles and the miraculous powers exercised by them, the Church will be restored to the pristine glory that was hers at the time of Pentecost. Enough time has passed to see that Restorationism has not restored the Kingdom. In Britain it represents between one and two per cent of evangelicals and a substantial part of the denomination has been drawn from other churches rather than representing new converts.

A preacher who labours among them tells me that there is a real hunger for expository, doctrinal, structured preaching in the Restoration Movement. So what does the Reformed Movement have to offer?

Is the Bible Enough?

Ted Donnelly from Trinity Reformed Presbyterian Church, Newtownabbey, Ulster, spoke at the conference described by John Palmer on the theme 'Is the Bible Enough?' In this address he declared, 'I really dislike this word "cessationist". It is such a wimpish, inadequate, pathetic word! It seems to say, "Poor people. Nothing more for them."' He used a telling illustration. Time was when the small boys in his church were collecting footballer stickers, pestering their mothers in supermarkets to purchase a packet, not knowing what pictures would be inside, then swapping them, trying to fill completely a big album. After a long time one boy collected the lot. What a joy it was for him. The other boys did not look in pity at this lad who had ceased all that frenzy of searching for an elusive sticker and saying, 'He's a cessationist!' They viewed him with admiration because he possessed the set. He had everything. They had still to go on and on in their frenzied search. It is better to call ourselves 'completist' rather than 'cessationist'. Completist is not a catchy term but it is the best we can find. What is the best equivalent in German, French, Italian or Russian? Perhaps we can compound a new word to signify that we really have been given everything we need. We may not market it well but we still have the complete works.

Prof Donnelly also pointed out how people are struck with a 'prophetic message' because of the 'immediacy' of its nature. He compared it to the buzz that would be caused if a radio-telescope picked up some crackling message from somewhere in the depths of space. The world would debate this phenomenon for years, even though they could not understand one iota of it, being overwhelmingly excited by its unorchestrated arrival from 'out there'. How different the Bible: it is not some jumbled message striking us because it has suddenly popped up. God has taken such pains over many years through many different people to bring to us exactly the words he wants us to receive.

A positive stance

Since we are completists should we not present the riches we possess more attractively? Ninety per cent of our apologetic toward Pentecostalism is negative. There are endless stories to tell of how efforts to bring back the supernatural have failed. For instance here in the Leeds area in the mid-19th century one John Wroe claimed to be a prophet and announced that he would walk on water. When the day came 30,000 lined the banks of the river. When John Wroe sank into the water many in the crowd pelted him with mud! There is a sense in which we have to be negative. If a car is seriously defective, the problem must be diagnosed. If someone is sick, the doctor must diagnose the ailment. But in giving the prognosis he needs to be gentle. Arnold Dallimore wonderfully succeeded in his *Life of Edward Irving* to be warm and positive toward Irving while at the same time showing the misguidedness of that Restorationist Movement which came to be called the Catholic Apostolic Church, a body very different from Restorationist movements of today.

It is important to assess the degree to which any movement is in possession of central truths. This was lacking in the presentation by Nick Needham.² For instance the Montanists were in error but they stood out against sacralism with courage. Sacralism was in due time to bring far worse damage to the testimony of Christianity than the fanaticism of a couple of deluded prophetesses within the Montanist Movement.

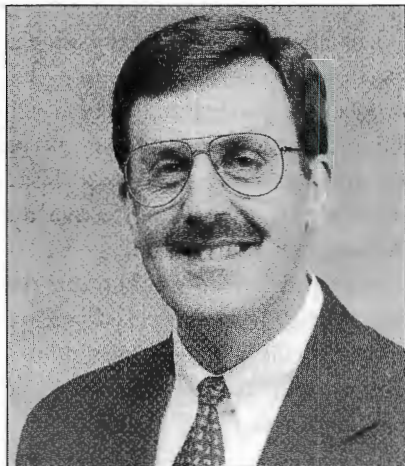
We need to be positive. Stuart Olyott achieved this well in his presentation of the completist case as a position of liberty. How thankful we are that we do not have to walk on water or produce signs, wonders and miracles. An evil and adulterous generation seeks a sign. We have the Word of God which is living and active, sharper than any double-edged sword (Heb 4:12).

Since we are completists we reason from a position of strength. We should not feel threatened. Our attitude should be cordial and generous to those from whom we differ. This charitable spirit is reflected in the book *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today?* reviewed by Bill James.

References

- 1 Andrew Walker, *Restoring the Kingdom, The Radical Christianity of the House Church Movement*, 416 pages, Eagle, 1998.
- 2 Needham's reference to the Montanists does not feature in the review by John Palmer but comes out in the cassette recording.

David Straub and RBMS



David Straub

David Straub is the Coordinator of RBMS (Reformed Baptist Mission Services) a portfolio which he has fulfilled from 1986 with great enterprise and with a zeal that has inspired the pastors and church members of the churches involved. He has built up an intimate relationship with these churches and the missionaries supported by them. This knowledge of the churches enabled David to have a vital and constructive role in the forming this year of ARBCA (Association of Reformed Baptist Churches in America).

In his work of encouraging mission David has travelled widely to countries as far apart as Columbia, Zambia, Cuba, Belarus and Serbia. In a visit to Kosovo, in spite of formidable obstacles, he organised the funding for the building of a warehouse which houses literature materials for six

language groups. Now the escalating civil war in Kosovo places the Christian work there under threat (see news).

David's work was to seek out those who sense a calling to be missionaries as well as to encourage indigenous work. The quarterly eight page broadsheet *Missionary Update* is edited by David. For the first quarter of this year he reported the visit of Pastor Jim Adams and himself to Cuba to encourage a new church planting work under the leadership of Pastor Daniel Perez. The journalism maintained by David is of a high standard and we always gain insights. For instance in Cuba about 5,000 new churches, mostly Pentecostal, have begun over the last four years. A feature of *Update* is the regular reports of the Vaughns in France, the Bloises in Jamaica, Baruch and Bracha Maoz in Israel, the Lines family in Colombia and the Worths in Scotland.

At the end of May David was due to be the visiting speaker at the annual Church conference in Israel organised by Grace and Truth Church (Baruch Maoz). This had to be cancelled because David was diagnosed as having a brain tumour. This was successfully removed but subsequent diagnosis has revealed a further aggressively malignant tumour which is inoperable. This is a severe trauma. David and his wife Sue exhibit a wonderful spiritual attitude in their suffering. We assure them of our sympathy, support and prayers.

Freedom from Tyranny!

A report by John Palmer

A very significant conference was held on Saturday 31 January at Chester. There is a concern felt by many that the biblical position on the cessation of the revelatory gifts is being surrendered by default, even in some Reformed circles. Entitled 'Spiritual Gifts and the Bible', this 'one off' conference sought to address this issue.

The organisers were pleasantly surprised that about 450 gathered, some from as far away as East Anglia and South Wales. The vast majority were clearly rejoicing in the clarity and usefulness of the four papers. These were by Ted Donnelly: *'Is the Bible enough?'*; Stephen Rees: *'Apostles, Prophecies, Tongues and Signs'*; Nick Needham: *'Charismatic Claims – Lessons from Church History'*; and Stuart Olyott: *'What Difference Does it Make?'*

The papers are summarised below except for Stephen Rees' paper which is published in full in this issue.

Is The Bible Enough?

Ted Donnelly

Church history answers, 'Yes'! The doctrine of 'Sola Scriptura' is vital for the health of the Church. There are five reasons why the Scripture is a sufficient revelation.

1. *Because of its authority* – It is God's Word given through his appointed spokesmen (2 Peter 1:21). It is not to be supplemented. If God were to speak again, it would have to be as in the past: through authoritative spokesmen in a way recognised by all the worldwide church; and in a normative way for all believers, with all required to believe and obey all such utterances.

2. *Because of its nature* – The Bible has such value because it is extraordinary. It is a word from heaven. If such were to be commonly given they would lose their power. Moreover, the Bible is a connected unity on the theme of salvation: God's given record of the facts of his redemptive work and explanation of those facts. We who call ourselves 'cessationists' are really 'sufficientists', satisfied that we have all that God in love wants to give us.

3. *Because of its definiteness* – Scripture means ‘that which is written’ – that is recorded accurately for all time. It is a great privilege to be able to know what God says now to us, without question or doubt. Proverbs 22:20 and Luke 1:3 stress that writing leads to the certainty of the truth being known. The alternative is confusion, uncertainty and division.

4. *Because of its purpose* – It is sufficient for salvation and a life of faith, holiness and service (2 Tim 3:16-17). It is not given perfectly to satisfy our curiosity but to equip us for these things. There is no duty which is not revealed in Scripture. So we are free from the tyranny of anyone ever being able to tell us that they have a further message from God which we must obey – we are set free into the freedom of the children of God.

5. *Because of its riches* – We cannot ‘use it all up’. The ‘new revelations’ do not give a new depth of truth. The attraction of such is not the content but the emotional wrapping with which they come. We should be humbled, but joyful, at what we have left to find in the Word.

Lessons from Church History

– Nick Needham

There is a temptation for us all to be prisoners of the present moment. Christians are not exempt from this – including Charismatic Christians. We can here consider only two periods of Church history.

1. The Church Fathers

The testimony of Origen in the second century was that miracles had faded out. Tertullian declared that the apostles had deposited the truth in the Word and now the Church receives it and hands it on. The Montanists of the second and third centuries had ‘prophets’ who spoke in ecstasies. This was condemned as pagan and the Montanists were excommunicated.

John Chrysostom in the fifth century argued from 1 Corinthians 13:8 that prophecy and tongues are now redundant. Augustine stated that tongues were a prophetic sign of the end of the Old Covenant and the dawn of the New.

Though there were reports of ongoing miracles, connected with the shrines of dead ‘saints’, from the middle of the fourth century, the more sober Fathers were sceptical of them. Chrysostom warned his flock: ‘Do not seek signs; seek the health of your soul.’

The one great and growing exception to the understanding that apostolic authority had ceased was the rise of the papacy; but this is hardly a belief in the continuing gifts as Charismatics would understand them!

2. The Modern Pentecostal Movement

The first serious departure from the Reformation understanding of the cessation of the revelatory gifts came in 1832 with the founding of the Catholic Apostolic Church. Interestingly, this was virtually the same time as the Mormon Church was being founded with its full range of 'Charismatic gifts'.

After this came Benjamin Irwin, who developed a three-stage view of the Christian life: conversion, then 'entire sanctification', then the 'baptism of spirit and fire', this last being accompanied by extreme physical manifestations. One of his disciples was Charles Fox Parham. His background was the Holiness Movement and an embracing of the teaching that healing is contained in the atonement. He further became convinced by the early Restorationists, the 'Latter Rain' movement. He began to teach that tongues is the one distinctive sign of the baptism in the Spirit, and that this baptism would produce a

'spiritual army' leading to the last, worldwide, revival.

In 1901 one of his Bible College students, Agnes Osman, claimed not only the gift of tongues but also of spirit-writing. Parham launched a crusade to spread this movement. One of his disciples was William Joseph Seymour who founded the Apostolic Faith Mission at Asuza Street in Los Angeles in 1906. 'Worship' there consisted of hours of swaying back and forth. Parham visited and even he was horrified, especially as known spiritists were actively involved in the worship.

Many in Los Angeles 'caught the fire' and many churches became Pentecostal. From this came the founding of many Pentecostal denominations in the USA, the UK and elsewhere. The phenomena on which these were based were rejected by evangelical churches as a delusion.

However, with the growth of the Ecumenical Movement since World War II, many 'main-line' churches- those in theologically mixed denominations- began to embrace this teaching. This led in the 1960s to the Charismatic Movement.

We must reject this as a work of God. It has a faulty, many-stage view of the working of the Holy

Spirit within the Christian. It encourages the by-passing of the mind. It is riddled with false prophecy. It has an extremely dubious parentage. We are really fighting again the battle against Montanism; we must be as robust as the Church was in the early centuries of the Christian era.

What Difference Does It Make?

– Stuart Olyott

Galatians 5:1 tells us that Christ has liberated us into a freedom which is precious and is to be jealously guarded. By believing the scriptural view on the cessation of the charismata we have three freedoms.

1. *Freedom from tyranny.* We are free from a tyranny from outside – free to own the Lord Jesus alone as Lord of the conscience. We are not dependent on man's 'words from God' to direct us in our daily life, for we have 'every word that proceeds from the mouth of God'. We are also free from a tyranny from inside – from self-deception; from a conscience itself deceived by 'words of knowledge'; from having to find an 'inner voice' to direct us in daily life.

2. *Freedom to enjoy the Bible.* We are not built up in the faith by the atmosphere of a meeting, but by

Christian understanding. We are not Barthians – we believe that God speaks through all Scripture to all his children. So we are free to open God's Word and meditate on it.

3. *Freedom to be the sort of Christians found in the Bible.* We are free to see the whole of the Christian life as supernatural, as we trust in a triune God whom we have never seen, and stand for him all our lives. This is the height of supernatural grace. We are free to be weak, for this is where God's power is to be found. We are free to be men without feeling guilty that we are not Supermen. We are free from feeling that we should already have arrived at a point where we can say, 'I'm there!' We are free to be ill without conscience telling us we lack faith. We are free to die without feeling this means we have ultimately failed. Finally, we are free not to be noticed by man – the world crucified to us and we to the world (Gal 6:14).

Tapes of the conference are available, price £7.20 for the set of four, from: Aigburth Recordings, 361 Aigburth Road, Aigburth, Liverpool, L17 0BP.

Apostles: cessation or continuation?

Stephen Rees

An exposition given at the 'Spiritual Gifts and the Bible' conference held in Chester on January 31. John Palmer's report on the conference appears on page 5.

Let me begin with three quotations:

The first is from American theologian and pastor Samuel Storms. He says this: 'The Holy Spirit will minister to God's people through God's people by means of the full range of *charismata* listed in such passages as 1 Corinthians 12:7-10, 28-30. I now embrace all the afore-mentioned gifts and encourage their use in the life and ministry of the church.'¹

My second quotation is taken from a book by Donald Bridge and David Phipers: *Spiritual Gifts and the Church* (IVP). They write, 'The Bible nowhere states that any of the gifts have passed away... all are set within the permanent framework of the nature of the church.'²

And finally Michael Green writes, 'Christians in the mainline of both Catholic and Protestant traditions have for a long time been very scared of allowing that these gifts of the Spirit of which we read in the New Testament might be expected to occur today... This attitude, however, is mere escapism from exposing ourselves to the Spirit's powerful life. He remains the Spirit of wind and fire; he remains sovereign in the Church, and is not to be boxed up in any ecclesiastical compartment.'³

All of these writers in their different ways say the same thing. They talk of the gifts that were given to the Church in the first century and then they say, 'All these gifts are for today.'

Many people would agree with them. Sometimes it is put as simply as this: 'Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. And if Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever, then we expect to see Jesus Christ doing exactly the same things now as he did back in the first century.'

I intend to demonstrate that they are wrong. Yes, Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. But that does not mean he is bound to do exactly the same things in every generation. And particularly, there were certain gifts that Jesus Christ gave to his Church at the beginning that he does not choose to give to his Church today.

We have in the New Testament three lists of gifts given by Jesus Christ to the Church. One list is found in Romans 12, another in 1 Corinthians 12 and a third in Ephesians chapter 4. We shall begin at Ephesians 4:11: 'It was he (the Lord Jesus) who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ might be built up.'

Here we read that Jesus Christ gave *apostles* to the Church. That is the very first gift that Paul mentions in this list. It is also top of the list in 1 Corinthians 12:28. So the question is: 'Does God give apostles to the Church today?'

Well, before we answer that question, we first have to decide what we mean by apostles.

Who were the apostles?

In Luke 6:12, we read this: 'One of those days, Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, *whom he designated apostles.*' And then Luke goes on to name the twelve.

Now notice, there were many people who followed Jesus, people who could be called disciples. 'Jesus called his disciples to him.' But then, we read, Jesus chose just twelve of them – and he designated them apostles. The word apostle simply means messenger, delegate – and sometimes it is used in that wider sense in the New Testament. But here we have twelve men who in a special way are marked out as *the* messengers, the delegates of Jesus Christ. They are given the office, the title of apostle. These twelve are singled out from all the other disciples to be his official delegates.

So the question is this. Does God give to his Church today people like these twelve – people who have the same position, the same authority as Simon Peter and Andrew and the rest of the twelve?

Now when the question is put in that way, most Christians will immediately reply, 'Of course not. Of course we don't have men like Simon or Andrew or James or John.' And they are right. It is perfectly clear from the New Testament that the apostles were a unique group of people. God never intended that we should have lots of apostles, new apostles in every generation.

How many apostles of Jesus Christ were there in the NT Church? Well, first there was this core group of twelve. Their number was reduced to eleven when Judas Iscariot apostatised. His place was taken by Matthias. Further than that we read of a handful of others who were added to the circle – Barnabas was one (Acts 14:14) – and of course, there was Paul.

For anybody to be included in this small circle, he had to have very definite qualifications. Consider the appointment of Matthias. Judas Iscariot's apostasy had left a gap in the circle of the twelve. So Peter, after the ascension, proposed that another man be chosen to fill his place. 'It is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from John's baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection' (Acts 1:21-22). Evidently, the man who was going to fill up the gap among the twelve had to meet certain qualifications. Firstly, he had to have known the Lord Jesus during his earthly ministry – 'while he went in and out among us'. Secondly, he had to be a witness to the resurrection, i.e. someone who had met the Lord Jesus after his resurrection.

There were two men who fulfilled those qualifications: Joseph Barsabbas and Matthias. So the church prayed to the Lord Jesus. 'Lord, you know everyone's heart. Show us which of these two you have chosen to take over this apostolic ministry.' They took it for granted that the Lord himself had already made a choice. They asked him to show them which man he had chosen to be the twelfth apostle. They cast lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. They did not want to make the choice themselves: that is why they cast lots. A little later (Acts 6), the church in Jerusalem could choose deacons. Paul and Barnabas could appoint elders in every city (Acts 14:23). But nobody could appoint an apostle. Jesus Christ himself had to make the choice, just as he chose the original twelve. That was the third qualification of an apostle. He had to be someone who has been chosen directly by Jesus Christ.

Let us consider the apostle Paul. Paul discusses his own apostleship in 1 Corinthians 15. 'For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that

he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter and then to the Twelve. After that he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and *last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born*. For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle because I persecuted the church of God' (1 Cor 15:3ff). The key words here are the words 'last of all'. Paul declares that he was the very last witness to the resurrection. All the other apostles saw Jesus during the forty days before he ascended into heaven, but Paul saw the risen Lord Jesus after the ascension. He was the apostle *abnormally born*. He was an anomaly. He was called to be an apostle when it seemed the time for calling apostles was over. As far as we know, he had no dealings with the Lord Jesus during his earthly ministry. And yet Jesus Christ appeared to him personally on the road to Damascus, called him personally, commissioned him as the last apostle.

Paul is clear. He is the very last man to whom the risen Lord Jesus will appear in this age. He is the very last man who is qualified to be an apostle: a witness to the resurrection.

Peter wrote to the Christians of Asia Minor, 'You have not seen him (the Lord Jesus) yet you love him' (1 Pet 1:8). Peter takes it for granted that not one of those Christians will have seen the Lord Jesus. The risen Lord Jesus does not appear to us visibly now. No one living today can say, 'I have witnessed the resurrection.' That is why there can never be another apostle. Nobody can say what Paul says at the beginning of Galatians: 'Paul an apostle – sent not from man nor by man, but by Jesus Christ.' Paul was the last man to receive that personal commission from the risen Lord Jesus. Just like the original twelve, just like Matthias, Paul had met with the risen Lord Jesus and been chosen directly by him.

So, one point is established. There is one gift, at least, that the Lord Jesus gave to the first-century Church that he does not give today. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. Yet he does not give us apostles like Peter or Andrew or Paul today.

That is the bottom line of what is labelled the cessationist position. By definition, anyone who accepts our argument so far is a cessationist! We have agreed that there was one gift at least that was needed at the beginning of the Church that is no longer needed today. The writers quoted at the head of this article say, 'All the gifts are for today.' But that is obviously not true of the gift

of apostleship. One gift at least has ceased. So there can be no objection in principle to the idea that other gifts too may have passed away.

The role of the apostles

Why did the Church of the first century need apostles – and we do not? Why did Jesus Christ give apostles to the Church then, but not now?

In Ephesians chapter 2 Paul addresses Gentile Christians. In the past, these people were ‘excluded from citizenship in Israel’ (v 12). They had no place among God’s people. But now, Paul writes, ‘In Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one’ (vs 13-14). ‘He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near’ (v 17). Jew and Gentile have been brought together in the fellowship of the Church. Paul continues, ‘You are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow-citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household, *built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets*, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord’ (vs 19-20). Paul pictures the Church rising up like a wonderful temple. It is made up of living stones: Jews and Gentiles who have been joined together in unity. And the building is founded on the apostles and prophets. They are there to be the foundation of this worldwide Church. And the chief foundation stone, the cornerstone, is Jesus Christ himself. The apostles and prophets are joined to him.

This is the reason why Jesus Christ gave apostles to the first-century Church. They were intended to be the once-for-all foundation of the Church, making it possible for the one Church, made up of Jews and Gentiles, to be built. We have no need for apostles today; the foundation has been laid. Our task is not to find new apostles. It is to build upon the foundation of those once-for-all apostles.

A further question arises. *How* did the apostles act as a foundation for the Church? What was the once-for-all work they did which made them the foundation?

There are three aspects to the foundational work of the apostles.

Firstly, they acted as a foundation by being witnesses to the resurrection. If

they had not seen the risen Lord Jesus Christ and preached what they saw, there would be no Church. The whole building of the Church rests upon the foundation of their preaching.

The second aspect is discussed in Ephesians chapters 2 and 3. Having argued that the apostles are the foundation of the worldwide Church, Paul continues, 'Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. In reading this then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets' (3: 2-5). Paul speaks of the special grace he has received from God, and then he explains what this special grace is: 'the mystery made known to me by revelation'. God had revealed to Paul a mystery. Paul was allowed to understand a truth which previously no-one could understand. The nature of that mystery is indicated in verse 4: it is 'the mystery of Christ (Messiah) which was not made known to men in other generations'. There was much about the coming Messiah which people in OT times could not understand. They knew he was coming, but they did not understand clearly how he would save men and women or how he would restore the people of God as a worldwide Church. But now, Paul declares, that mystery has been revealed by the Spirit – to himself specifically, but more generally to 'God's holy apostles and prophets'. To them was revealed the mystery 'that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus' (3:6).

This then is the second aspect of the apostles' foundational role. They were the people who first understood the mystery of Christ. God revealed to them the great truths about Jesus Christ, his person, his work. They were not only witnesses to the historical facts concerning Christ. They were also given the work of unfolding the great truths about Jesus Christ: his humanity, his deity, his incarnation, his obedience, his atoning death, his triumphant resurrection, his intercession, his final triumph. Once and for all, they opened up those truths – and it is on those truths that the Church is founded and built.

Above all, they opened up the truth that Jesus Christ is a Saviour for Jews and Gentiles alike, that both can share equally in the promise of salvation through Jesus Christ. That insight was resisted fanatically by Judaisers who insisted that, in order to be saved, Gentiles must first take on Jewish identity by being circumcised. Even after the Council of Jerusalem Paul had to battle to maintain the principle. If Paul and the other apostles had not seen and maintained that

truth in the face of all opposition, the Church could never have been built. The Church is founded on that great truth which was revealed once for all to the apostles.

The third element in the apostles' foundational role is the authority they exercised in the writing of Scripture. The apostles are the foundation of the Church because they are the men who were given authority to record in Scripture their witness to the historical facts concerning Christ, and their inspired insights into the mystery of Christ.

The books of the New Testament were all either written by apostles or by people under the direct supervision of the apostles. Even a cursory reading of the New Testament will show that the apostles knew they were writing Holy Scripture. They claimed the full authority of Jesus Christ. They knew that what they were writing was binding on all Christians for all time. The apostles had a unique authority – they could write infallible Scripture.

So in these three ways, the role of the apostles was a once-for-all-time role. They were chosen to be the foundation. The work they did was work that was done once. It never can be repeated. It never needs to be repeated.

The gift of prophecy

We now need to consider the gift of prophecy. If we have grasped the role of the apostles, the significance of the prophets becomes very clear. Three times in the verses quoted from Ephesians chapters 2-3, Paul couples together the apostles and the prophets. In chapter 2 verse 20, we are told that the prophets belong with the apostles as the foundation of the Church. In chapter 3 verse 5, we're told that the mystery of Christ has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. The prophets shared the once-for-all task of unfolding the great foundation truths.

We should not expect to have prophets today any more than we expect to have apostles. They were part of the foundation. To them, along with the apostles, the 'mystery of Christ' was revealed. They did not have the authority that the apostles had to write infallible Scripture, but they did share the apostles' work of unfolding the great gospel doctrines on which the Church was to be built.

The book of Revelation is the foremost example of this. The book was written by John the apostle. But a number of passages refer to a group of prophets who

worked with him. It is clear that these prophets shared John's foundational work. The mystery of God is revealed to them (10:7); the Holy Spirit inspired the prophets to act as witnesses to Jesus (19:10); the Lord God gave the revelation not only to John but also to his brothers the prophets (22:6,9).

Apostles and prophets belong together as the foundation. When the one gift passes away, so does the other. We do not need prophecies any longer, because the apostles and prophets together have once for all unfolded the mystery of Christ and it has been written down in Scripture. The foundation is complete.

The gift of tongues

Let's think next about the gift of tongues. Now before we ask whether the gift of tongues has passed away, we must be sure we understand what the gift of tongues was. The word just means languages. 'All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each of them heard them speaking *in his own language*' (Acts 2:4 ff). Clearly they were speaking real languages and there was real content in what they said. The people in the crowd said, 'We hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues' (2:11). The believers were proclaiming the wonderful works of God. Tongue-speaking did not mean pouring out ecstatic, incomprehensible sounds. These men were proclaiming God's truth, though in languages they had never learned.

Notice something else here in Acts chapter 2. The people in the crowd are amazed by what is happening. So Peter shows that it's fully in line with OT prophecy. Verse 15: 'These men are not drunk as you suppose. It's only nine o'clock in the morning! No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will *prophesy*, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.'" Peter's use of Joel's prophecy is striking. Joel spoke of people: prophesying. Peter points to those who were speaking in tongues and says: 'This is what Joel was talking about.'

The implication is clear. Tongue-speaking was viewed as a form of prophecy. The only difference from other prophecies was that it was given in a language that the speaker had never learned.

Paul says exactly the same thing (1 Cor 14:5): 'He who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, *unless he interprets*.' Paul's point is clear. Once tongues are interpreted they are exactly on a par with prophecy.

According to Joel's prophecy, the New Testament age would be marked by a great outpouring of prophetic gifts. The gift of tongues was one aspect of that outpouring. If the gift of prophecy passes away, then tongues pass away too.

The purpose of tongues

Why did Jesus Christ give this strange gift to his Church in the first century? The gift must be viewed in its context.

All through Old Testament times, the Jewish nation was God's chosen special people. The Word of God was given to that nation alone. It was given in Hebrew, the language of the Jewish people. That was one mark of their special standing before God. Yet on the day of Pentecost, God began to give his Word not in Hebrew but in all the languages of the Gentile nations! Joel's words were being fulfilled. It is difficult to imagine the shock-wave for orthodox Jewish people. The long-awaited New Age had dawned – but in this New Age, God was speaking through his prophets, not in the language of Israel but in the languages of the Gentiles. It was the clearest possible sign that Israel was no longer going to have the same special privileges. In this New Age God's people were going to be drawn from all nations.

That was the purpose of the gift of tongues. It was a sign that the old age was ending. A New Age was dawning: the age in which God's people would be drawn from all nations.

Thus, in one sense, the gift of tongues was a sign of blessing. It was the proof that the gospel really was for all nations. But the gift of tongues was also a warning. When Jewish people heard these believers speaking in these Gentile languages, they should have taken it as a warning. They had rejected their Messiah. Soon the vineyard would be taken from them and given to others.

Jesus had warned that within a generation the city of Jerusalem would be destroyed by the Gentiles and Israel would be scattered. In 70 AD, just forty years later, everything he predicted came to pass. Judgment fell on Israel and the times of the Gentiles began.

All through those forty years, God was warning Israel. Every time that a Christian believer spoke in tongues, it was one more reminder that Israel was close to judgment.

That is the way Paul explains the gift of tongues in 1 Corinthians 14:21-24. 'In the Law it is written: "Through men of strange tongues and through the lips of foreigners, I will speak to this people, but even then they will not listen to me, says the Lord.'" The quotation is taken from Isaiah 28:11-12. Isaiah warned the people of Israel: since they refused to hear God's Word when it was spoken plainly, now God would speak to them through 'men of strange tongues and through the lips of foreigners'. 'This people' (1 Cor 14:20) is clearly 'the people of Israel'. When God starts speaking in foreign languages, it is a sign that Israel is under judgment.

Tragically, Isaiah warned that even when God does speak in this way, Israel will not listen. Paul quotes him to that effect (14:21): 'But even then they will not listen to me, says the Lord.' Verse 22: 'Tongues are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers.' Tongues are a sign to unbelieving Jewish people that they are under judgment. But when they hear these messages in tongues, they will not repent (14:23); instead they will say that the tongue-speakers are out of their minds – just as they did on the day of Pentecost.

So the gift of tongues – this special form of prophecy – had a very definite role to play at one point in history. It could take many forms. When translated, it could be used to edify believers. Just like prophecy in the OT, it could take the form of prayer or praise – maybe even of a hymn. But if we ask why the gift was given in the first place, the answer is: to be a warning to unbelieving Israel that judgment was at hand. The old age was passing away and the New Age had dawned. Just like apostleship and prophecy, the gift of tongues was foundational. It marked the fact that as a nation, Israel was being put aside. It was a living expression of the 'mystery of Christ' – the revelation that the NT Church was to be made up of Jewish and Gentile believers without distinction.

We no longer need the gift of tongues. Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 AD. God's warnings to Israel were over. Judgment had arrived.

Healings, signs and wonders

Our primary concern in this address has been *revelation* gifts. However, we

should consider finally the gift of healing and other gifts of power which Paul speaks about (1 Cor 12:10).

I would urge you to read through Acts and to ask yourself a simple question: 'Who in the first-century Church did miracles?' I think you will realise immediately that it was only a very small number of people who did miracles. Those people were all apostles or people directly linked with the apostles: people like Stephen and Philip on whom the apostles laid hands. Luke very carefully points out that there were some things that were true of *all* believers; there were other things that were true only of the apostles. Acts chapter 2 verse 43: 'Everyone was filled with awe – and many wonders and miraculous signs were done *by the apostles.*' Acts 5:12: 'Great fear seized *the whole church* and all who heard about these events. *The apostles* performed many miraculous signs and wonders among the people. And *all the believers* used to meet together.' That is the pattern you find throughout the book of Acts.

Paul (2 Cor 12:12) speaks of the '*signs of an apostle*' or as the NIV puts it, 'the things that mark an apostle'. Referring to his own ministry, he says, 'The things that mark an apostle – signs, wonders and miracles – were done among you with great perseverance.' Some people had denied that Paul was a true apostle. Paul in reply appealed to his miracles as signs of his apostolic authority. The gift of working miracles was not given to everybody. It was given to mark out the apostles.

This should be seen in a wider context. There were two great phases in the giving of the Old Testament. We speak of the Law and the Prophets. Moses was the one through whom the *Law* was given. For forty years he was given wonderful miraculous power. Moses had a successor – Joshua – and he too performed miracles. But then many hundreds of years passed before there was another outpouring of miraculous gifts. That was in the time of Elijah, the first of the great OT *prophets*. Like Moses, Elijah was given the gift of working miracles. He too had a successor, Elisha, who shared in that outpouring. After Elisha there were again hundreds of years during which God withheld such gifts. That was the situation right down to the time of the coming of the New Testament revelation. Even John the Baptist did no miracle.

But then Jesus came, bringing the New Covenant message of salvation, and exercising unparalleled miraculous power. As Moses was followed by Joshua, as Elijah was followed by Elisha, the Lord Jesus was followed by the apostles. They shared in the great outpouring of miraculous power which marked his ministry. The pattern is clear.

We see that at each of the key stages in the giving of revelation, God marked out his messengers by miraculous gifts. The writer to the Hebrews (2:3-4) tells us that the purpose of signs, wonders and various miracles was to confirm the message of the apostles – those who were taught by Jesus personally and became the first preachers of salvation. ‘This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us *by those who heard him, God also bearing witness with signs, wonders and various miracles...*’

We are not saying of course that miracles cannot happen today. All through history, God has done wonderful, supernatural things. But we are saying that God does not give the gift – the *charisma* – of working miracles to any man today. The gift of miracle-working was given to be the sign of an apostle. And we have seen that there are no apostles today.

Something better

I am aware that this paper may seem to be very negative in its argument. All I have attempted is to show that certain gifts are not for today. So let me come back finally to the central point. The reason we do not need these gifts today is because we have something better. The apostles and the prophets have finished their work. They were chosen by Jesus Christ himself. They were marked out by miraculous gifts. They were inspired by the Holy Spirit to record in Scripture their infallible understanding of the mystery of Christ. And we have the whole Scripture in our hands to tell us of Jesus Christ. The whole mystery of Christ has been unfolded for us. We can go to this book and find Jesus Christ in all the dimensions of his glory. We have the full picture.

And we have the Holy Spirit to bring the message of Christ home to our hearts. ‘He will testify of me,’ said Jesus.

I would not go back to the days of the apostles if I could. What I need is not new revelations. What I need is the drawing near of the Holy Spirit to make the once-for-all revelation of Christ plain in my heart. That is our great need in these days.

Footnotes

- 1 S Storms: ‘A Third Wave View’ in W Grudem ed. *Are miraculous gifts for today? Four views*, IVP, 1996, p 175.
- 2 D Bridge & D Phipers, *Spiritual Gifts and the Church*, IVP, 1973, p 27.
- 3 M Green, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, Hodder & Stoughton. 1975, pp 197-8.

The Life of Edward Irving

by Arnold Dallimore, *Banner of Truth, Edinburgh, 1983,*
188pp, £6.95 \$13.99

The life of Irving is sketched out for us in this review article by Tom Wells

The name Edward Irving (1792-1834) is not a household phrase in the late 20th century. Arnold Dallimore's excellent biography will not change that fact appreciably, but more's the pity. Almost beyond any 19th-century example, Irving shows the power of a good man – in some respects a great man – to follow the inclinations of his heart without the restraining influences of Scripture to make short work of his excesses.

Dallimore sets before us a giant among men. Well over six feet tall, in an age when men were three or four inches shorter than they are now, his gifts stood taller yet in the eyes of his contemporaries. As a public speaker he attracted large crowds in a London well-endowed with religious orators. His capacity for friendship drew such men as Thomas Carlyle and S T Coleridge into his circle. They found him 'a man entirely free from such vices as jealousy and envy, a man overflowing with goodness and charity... Nevertheless, the less prominent members of his flock had the larger portion of his time. He loved the poor in London ... and he always had a special care and concern for children and the elderly. To many

people he seemed the very essence of what they felt a minister should be ... The penitent and suffering ever found in him a most gracious friend and he visited the sick or watched by the dying with heart-felt compassion' (pp 15, 35). Thomas Carlyle wrote after Irving's death that he was 'the noblest, largest, brotherliest man I have ever known' (p 15). In addition, it is clear that Dallimore loves him too, though the story he tells has large elements of tragedy about it.

Irving was one of those unfortunate creatures who are suddenly catapulted from obscurity to fame. After assisting the well-remembered Thomas Chalmers in Glasgow, he was called to London to pastor the Caledonian Chapel. There he abandoned himself to the work. None of London's elite had ever heard his name, but due to great oratorical ability he soon attracted attention. The famous, both in literature and politics, began to throng his chapel, creating pandemonium in the streets outside. Before long a building seating 1800 had to be erected to accommodate the crowds. Dallimore gives us a sampling of notables who might be found sitting at his feet:

Future Prime Ministers George Canning and William Gladstone, Zachary Macaulay, Charles Lamb, William Hazlitt, Thomas De Quincey, William Wordsworth and Sir Walter Scott. Heady company for a man in his thirties!

But fame did not begin the ruin of Edward Irving; speculation did. Like more than one gifted speaker before and since, he let prophecy command too much of his time and attention. Worse, he took his views as much from conversation with Coleridge as from the Scriptures. 'Moved by his vigorous imagination he could immediately fix upon the meaning of 'the beasts', 'the heads' or 'the horns in Daniel'... His views were clothed in the ornate splendour of his lofty language' (p 59). Such things became the staple diet of his ministry and Dallimore, who is the friendliest of critics, reminds us that Irving rescued from obscurity the subject of the return of Christ for many of his generation.

Perhaps so, but the admitted extremes to which he went and the one-sided emphasis which he fanned with a luxuriant imagination lost him more and more of the educated members of his congregation. The crowds remained, but their composition changed. Uncritical hearers began to fill the places left vacant by those who listened more acutely. Under the leadership of Irving, himself inspired by a Scots teenager named Mary

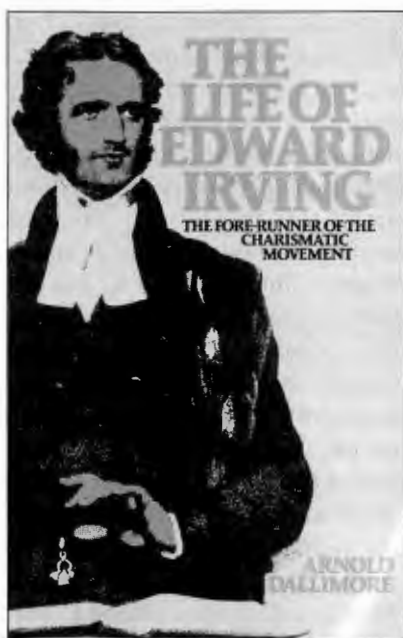
Campbell, this sincere but relatively naive congregation was about to hear of the restoration of the conditions of the first-century 'apostolic' church.

Mary Campbell was a pious young lady, suffering an extended illness, who came to believe that she would be healed and go forth as a missionary. In 1830, she received a 'gift' of tongues which she took to be the language of the Pelew Islanders in the South Seas. Friends of hers also experienced the gift along with 'interpretation' and the gift of prophecy. Before long news spread to London and Edward Irving joined in the chorus of those who thought the days of the apostles had returned. 'Several people [in the autumn and winter of 1830-1831] opened their homes for prayer with the definite purpose of claiming the promise 'I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh'... In the spring, the answer came! First one and then another woman in the congregation spoke in tongues -- The delight of many knew no bounds' (p 112). Many of them also joined in speaking in tongues. Before long a group of six, mostly well-to-do and educated, became an inner circle around Irving, a charmed circle of 'prophets'. Meanwhile Irving himself had received nothing miraculous. He assumed he would participate and anticipated what it would be like, but all the gifts passed him by. They multiplied in the church to the point eventually of utter disorder, but Irving tenaciously supported

the participants as an outsider looking in.

As a Presbyterian minister Irving had to answer to others. The confusion in his church led to serious division, moving the local Presbytery to put him on trial on April 26, 1832. 'On the morning of the trial a knock sounded on his door. To his amazement the visitor was none other than Robert Baxter [one of the inner circle of six] and in his hour of distress Irving heard this man who had formerly been the strongest advocate of the manifestations declare he had come to the conviction that despite their seeming supernaturalism they were merely a grand delusion. [For the grounds of this inescapable conclusion see Dallimore's chapter 18.] And with this shattering announcement ringing in his ears... Irving went forth to his trial.' He was judged to be 'unfit to remain the minister of the National Scottish Church' (p 146).

It would be a great mercy to Irving's memory to draw the curtain on the remaining two and a half years of his life. But biography cannot be written that way and Dallimore does not so write it. It is to Dallimore's credit that he bleeds with Irving as he records his facts. I have read dozens of biographies, but never have I seen a critic enter into the feelings of his subject as Dallimore has done. I have said that Dallimore loved Irving. Here you will find the evidence.



Front cover of the biography of Edward Irving by Arnold Dallimore

When Irving left the Presbyterian Church about 800 people joined him in establishing 'the Church in Newman Street'. To an outsider it was Irving's church, but that was not true. With his insistence on the reality of the gifts and hence of the apostolic order, Irving sanctioned the birth of a monster. And the monster turned on him. It was natural enough that the 'gifted' people should seize control. But the supernatural gifts had passed Irving by, so in the new church he found himself directed by the whims or the revelations of the Prophets. Whims he might have ignored, but he firmly believed in the Prophets and their utterances, so he followed their

wishes. He willingly became, in fact, their pawn. At the same time he was too wise a man not to see that many prophecies failed and much of the utterance bore no certain meaning. How could this be? Irving concluded that Satan had a hand in some prophecies while God was the author of others. But even here he was not allowed to rest, for he recognised that many of the prophetic utterances had elements both of truth and falsity. Reluctantly but inescapably, given his convictions, he had to credit some parts of individual utterances to God and some parts to Satan. The burden this would place upon a man of Irving's intellectual and moral gifts is better imagined than analysed. This was more than many of his own closest friends could accommodate, but he pressed forward in his conviction that God was restoring the early Church. So deep was the restoration-ist vision, that he could not turn back.

His death came in pursuing this vision. One of the Prophets announced that God was sending Irving to Glasgow to do a great work there. Already weary in body, but still buoyant in spirit, Irving set out in September 1834 to obey the voice of God. He travelled slowly toward his destination, hoping for some rest from his weariness by relaxing travel through England and Wales. He reached Glasgow in late November, feeble in strength and dogged by fever. On two Sundays he preached

sitting in a chair. It was too much, his health was gone. The man judged both good and great by the best of his contemporaries died in early December, 1834. When Robert Murray M'Cheyne learned of his death he wrote in his diary: 'I look back upon him with awe, as on the saints and martyrs of old. A holy man, in spite of all his de.usions and errors. He is now with his God and Saviour, whom he wronged so much, yet, I am persuaded, loved so sincerely' (p 179).

Dallimore closes with an evaluation of Irving's position on these controversial matters. He is gentle with the man but bold to show the shortcomings of his doctrine. An interesting thing happens at the end: Dallimore raises the question as to how Irving, given the excesses of his ministry, could be thought to be a Christian at all. I will let the reader search out Dallimore's answer and suggest one of my own. In 1 Corinthians 3:10-15 stands a building with wood, hay and stubble that will be burned up. The passage is often taken of all the works of all Christians to bolster the so-called 'Carnal Christian' doctrine. But there is a better choice. Paul speaks as a minister of Jesus Christ to other ministers and teachers who seek to build up the body of Christ. His warning amounts to this: In his zeal to do good, the minister of Christ may use false teaching or false methods to add followers to the visible Church. If so, he will survive and they will not.

Are Miraculous Gifts for Today?

Are miraculous gifts for today?

four views

editor: Wayne Grudem

IVP (UK)/ Zondervan (USA), 368pp,
pbk.

A review by Bill James

In facing any issue of controversy it is important to know and understand the positions of those with whom we differ. We will only discredit our own cause if we shoot at straw men, or caricature our opponents by highlighting only their most extreme aberrations. This book edited by Wayne Grudem is a most helpful summary of the range of views embraced today. The representatives of each position are well-respected academics: Richard Gaffin of Westminster Theological Seminary speaks for the cessationist position; Robert Saucy takes an 'Open but Cautious' viewpoint; Samuel Storms speaks for the 'Third Wave'; and Douglas Oss takes the Pentecostal/Charismatic view. In such a brief volume as this, each representative has only a small compass (50 pages) in which to state his case. There is then a brief response from each of the other contributors to each position paper. The issues covered are,

- a. Baptism in the Spirit and post-conversion experience;
- b. Whether some gifts have ceased;
- c. The gifts of prophecy, tongues and healing;

- d. Practical implications for church life;
- e. The dangers of each position.

Gaffin's defence of cessationism focuses particularly on the issue of continuing prophecy. It is observed that all who accept the unique authority of the apostles and the authority of the completed canon of the New Testament are cessationist in one sense. The burden of proof for ongoing revelation lies then with the continuationists, not with the cessationists.

Gaffin points out that any claims to continuing prophecy necessarily undermine Scripture in some way. Even if some argue that modern prophecy is a fallible and subordinate standard, it is still new revelation which speaks about specific situations of guidance or action and which therefore cannot be tested or contradicted by Scripture unless it clearly breaks a biblical command. 'To use Calvin's classic figure of the Bible as the eyeglasses indispensable for understanding ourselves and the rest of creation, prophecy is an additional lens that enhances vision; it temporarily augments or, on occasion, may even replace the lens of Scripture' (p53).

Storms, in his 'Third Wave' chapter, robustly defends the continuation of modern prophecy. He argues that such gifts were not intended merely to accompany and attest the apostolic message of the first century but to edify

the Church in every age. Modern prophecy is then defined as fallible and non-authoritative. We are asked to believe that the NT uses the word prophecy in two distinct ways - firstly describing the inerrant and authoritative pure Word of God (as for example in Eph 2:11) and secondly describing an imperfect and non-authoritative word (as for example in Eph 4:11). Storms explains that modern 'prophecy' falls into the latter category. He tells us that the revelation from God is always perfect, but that the reception, understanding and delivery of the 'prophecy' by the prophet is frequently flawed.

There is nothing new in these arguments. Much of the argument on cessationism is carried out in the arena of biblical theology. The whole debate is carried out in polite and gracious

tones, and in relatively academic style. One might be tempted to come away from this book with a shrug of the shoulders: on a personal view Gaffin has the best of the argument, but these are all godly men and this is just one of those matters of disagreement on detail. But Gaffin in his concluding remarks hints at the real import of this debate. In practice what is at stake is whether the Bible or experience will take centre stage. Gaffin remarks, 'While the commitment to Biblical authority shared by the participants in this volume is promising, I am still left with the inescapable impression that the view represented by Oss and Storms is, in important respects, in tension with that commitment' (p337). If that be true, then this is a debate of vital importance for the future of the evangelical Church.

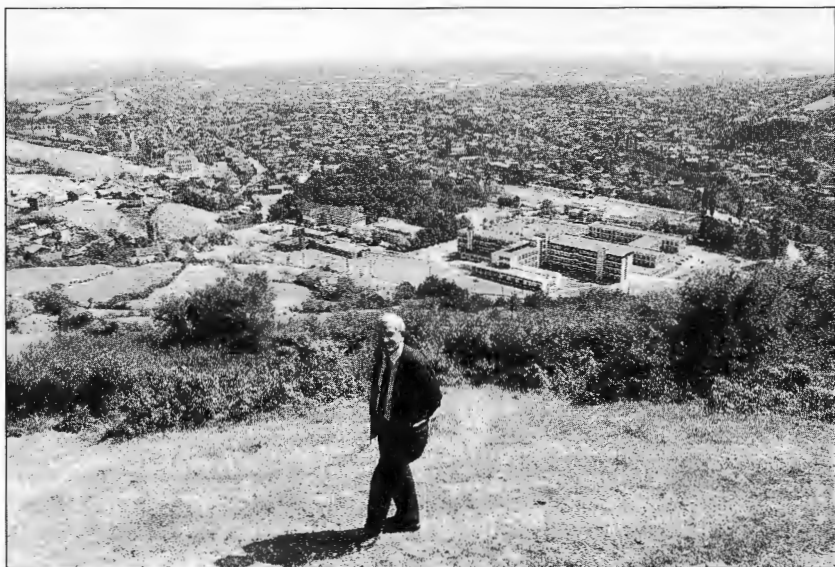
The positive side of Montanism (see page 3)

In view of the increasing worldliness in the Church, and the way in which among the leaders learning was taking the place of spiritual power, many believers were deeply impressed with the desire for a fuller experience of the indwelling and power of the Holy Spirit, and were looking for spiritual revival and return to apostolic teaching and practice.

The Montanists hoped to raise up congregations that should return to primitive piety, live as those waiting for the Lord's return and, especially, give to the Holy Spirit His rightful place in the Church. Though there were exaggerations among them in the pretensions of some to spiritual revelations, yet they taught and practised needed reform. They accepted in a general way the organisation that had developed in the Catholic churches and tried to remain in their communion; but while the Catholic bishops wished to include in the Church as many adherents as possible, the Montanists constantly pressed for definite evidences of Christianity in the lives of applicants for fellowship. The Catholic system obliged the bishops to take increasing control of the churches, while the Montanists resisted this, maintaining that the guidance of the churches was the prerogative of the Holy Spirit, and that room should be left for his workings.

E. H. Broadbent, *The Pilgrim Church*, Pickering, 1931, rep. 1985.

News



*Simo Ralević standing on the foothills of the mountains overlooking the town of Peć.
Beyond can be seen the plain of Kosovo*

Kosovo

Simo Ralević and the strife in Kosovo – A report by Roger Weil

Friends of our brother Simo Ralević will know that he lives in the town of Peć in the Serbian province of Kosovo which has recently been much in the news due to the strife there between the Serbs and the Albanians.

I first visited the area in 1965 and continued to do so annually until 1992 taking a keen interest in Simo and his dynamic ministry as it developed over the years. Both the

Serbs and the Albanians claim the land as theirs and this has now led to fighting breaking out between them. During the war in Bosnia a new phrase was coined: 'ethnic cleansing'. This is now being practised by both sides in Kosovo although the media have only drawn attention to fleeing Albanians and, for whatever reason, failed to mention fleeing Serb villagers from the area around Dečani.

At the beginning of June we heard through e-mail that Simo and the believers in his church were safe but there is a shortage of food and the situation is very tense. Simo's family

are temporarily in the north of Serbia where his wife and daughter are having medical checks before, they hope, returning to Kosovo. However all road and rail links have been cut by the government as well as the telephone so the future is very uncertain. Simo's son told me that there is now *war* in Kosovo and humanly speaking the situation could hardly be worse. What should they do? Should Simo, his family and the wider family of relatives and believers leave the region, abandon their church and literature warehouse for safety over the border? Surely all our readers will join us in prayer to God for their protection and wisdom to be given to discern his will for them, both now and in the future.

Mozambique

This report comes from Karl Peterson at the end of his first term of service for which he prepared thoroughly over an extended period visiting and corresponding with ministers and missionaries in adjacent countries and making visits to meet local church leaders with whom he would work. Finally he and his wife Glynn lived in Portugal for a year to become conversant in Portuguese which is used widely in Mozambique. We trust that they and their family, Elsa (3), Cole (1) and the new baby expected in September will be refreshed by the

furlough and be eager to take up the work in Mozambique for a further term.

March '98 – Elsa, in her late 70s lives in a rusty sheet iron shack 7'x10'. She cultivates crops about a mile away and depends on these for her living. Every day she walks a distance to fetch a 5 gallon drum of water for her needs. From a life of fear of demons she received faith to declare boldly that she now belonged to Christ and that the devil no longer had authority over her.

An intensive course in Shangaan at the University of Maputo is already proving very helpful in communicating with our church members in their own tongue.

5 June – We are just arriving back from a trip up to the northern province of Tete in Mozambique. On the way we spent two days in Kruger Park (South Africa) seeing all sorts of animals out in the wild. Most impressive was a herd of 30 elephants crossing the road right in front of our car. The children had fun seeing giraffe, hippos and crocodiles.

The family then stayed in a guest house in Zimbabwe run by friends of ours while I went back into Mozambique travelling by car with Mozambican workers, both in the city of Tete and into the district of Mutarra along the Zambezi river just

south of Malawi. About 400 people gathered from many miles around. We had many sessions of preaching and teaching.

It was a delight to sense the reception of God's Word. My great fear is that these churches among whom I minister are experiencing a dilution of the gospel. So the themes I mainly preached on were salvation and the doctrines of grace. They soaked up everything. When we return from furlough I will consider returning to Tete city for two weeks to teach Bible classes.

Italy

Andrea Ferrari, who is a member of the *International Fellowship of Reformed Baptists*, has been involved for some time in a ministry of publishing Reformed literature in Northern Italy. In November 1997 he joined pastor Renato Giuliani as co-pastor of a small Reformed Baptist church in the area north of Rome. The church was constituted with eight members and seven children. They are encouraged by the regular attendance of some from the outside including non-Christians. The address is: Christian Bible Church, Via Berardinelli 97, 00123 Roma – La Storta. Tel 0039 761 608 815.

We are encouraged to pray for their witness in a materialistic society

where the majority of people tend to be very superstitious and are open to the emphasis on the supernatural which is predominant in large Charismatic rallies. This young church is also involved in the publication of Reformed literature and publishes a well produced quarterly Journal of pastoral practice (*Giornale di pratica pastorale*).

Pastor Ferrari can be contacted by e-mail at: santichi@tin.it

Tribute to Arnold Dallimore (1911-1998)

by the editor



Arnold Dallimore

Arnold Dallimore is best known for his two volume biography of George Whitefield. Dr Dallimore was pastor of the Cottam Baptist Church, Ontario, Canada, for 23 years. It was as pastor of this village church that he began his research on Whitefield. It

took twenty years and many visits to England before volume one was published and another ten years before the second volume appeared. When he came to England he stayed with us and also with Stanley and Marian Hogwood. I will never forget his industry. Short in stature but mighty in energy and stamina he would relentlessly track needed details for his work. He ate, slept, talked and re-enacted the life and times of Whitefield, the Wesleys and their contemporaries and always in a way reminiscent of the revival atmosphere of those times. He communicated a 'feeling' of confidence in the extraordinary power of the gospel to change lives which is sensed in some countries today but is notably absent in most Western nations at this time.

Dr Dallimore's literary work included fine biographies of Charles Wesley, Susanna Wesley, Edward Irving, C H Spurgeon, and a contemporary of his, Jack Scott. He wished to write a biography of T T Shields (his tutor and principal when he was a student at the Toronto Bible College) but he felt that to be too controversial and kept postponing the project. Like many leaders T T Shields was a strange mixture. It is still too near his time to go into detail about his aggressive fundamentalist style

although Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones was courageous in daring to address the problem with some effect.

Arnold felt passionately indignant about the way in which John Wesley virtually 'took over' much of George Whitefield's pioneering work. But he learned to temper his feelings of injustice and was resigned to the fact that there can be no corrective now. It was his ability really and closely to get beside his subjects that made Arnold an excellent biographer. Tom Wells observes this in his article and notes that readers of Dallimore's most readable *Life of Irving* soon sense the brotherly love of the author toward his wayward subject, almost as if he would have drawn him back successfully had he been there at the time.

Arnold was essentially a family man and, with his large family, supported the annual Canadian Carey Family Conference organised by Reformed Baptist leader Bill Payne.

We give glory to our Triune God for raising up Dr Dallimore and equipping him with the gifts and perseverance to enrich the wider Church with his books. We remember with sympathy Mrs May Dallimore in her loss.

Ferguson's Forlorn Client Vindicated

A review by the editor

The Holy Spirit –

Contours of Christian Theology,
Sinclair Ferguson,
IVP, 288pp pbk. 1996.

Sinclair Ferguson is the author of a number of books of high quality. He is an associate editor of the *Banner of Truth* magazine. For years he has been a trans-Atlantic commuter living in Glasgow but occupying the position of professor of systematic theology at Westminster Seminary, Philadelphia. Soon he is to take up the pastorate of St George's Tron, Glasgow, in succession to Eric Alexander who is retiring.

This blurb on the back cover of this highly commended book reads: 'The amazing spread of Pentecostalism world-wide since the beginning of this century, and the rapid growth of the Charismatic movement in many denominations since the sixties, have forced the doctrine of the Holy Spirit to the forefront of theology today. In this book Ferguson seeks to frame a theology of the Spirit which relates the Spirit's work both to the history of salvation and to such matters of contemporary interest as the significance of Pentecost and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Particularly valuable is his exploration of the role of the Spirit in the ministry of Christ and his discussion

of the cosmic, eschatological work of the Spirit.'

This blurb recommends two of the eleven chapters, but the two which in fact particularly meet the need posed by the Pentecostals are: *Pentecost today?* and *Gifts for ministry*.

The author describes Pentecost as epochal and programmatic rather than paradigmatic (that is the pattern to be followed for every Christian in his experience). That is how the apostle Peter interpreted Pentecost (Acts 11:15-18). In Luke/Acts Pentecost is portrayed as a redemptive-historical event. It is not primarily to be interpreted existentially and pneumatologically, but eschatologically and Christologically. By its very nature it shares in the decisive once-for-all character of the entire Christ-event (Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension). In this context, the Acts of the Apostles is not so much 'the Acts of the Holy Spirit' but 'the (continuing) Acts of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit'.

According to the author the events at Ephesus do not belong to the same order as those at Samaria and Caesarea. He maintains that Luke deliberately presents the happenings there as idiosyncratic and atypical. He affirms that these events at Jerusalem (Pentecost), Philip at Samaria, Peter at Caesarea, and Paul at Ephesus with the twelve

disciples, are not to be interpreted as paradigmatic but as *sui generis* which means unique or belonging to its own kind. Prof Ferguson does not neglect the experimental dimensions involved in these events but insists on their primary nature as historical. He goes on to expound the baptism of the Holy Spirit for all Christians in the light of the historic events of Acts.

Within the chapter *Gifts for the ministry* there is a masterly treatment of Cessationism, a position which has mostly prevailed in previous centuries without any serious rival but which today is gasping for survival. Like a barrister Sinclair Ferguson starts out by pointing to the forlorn, almost abject case of his client. He then proceeds systematically to unfold the weaknesses of the arguments arrayed against his client. He shows that in spite of all the great claims and hype for the Charismatic case of continuation, the arguments when scrutinised, are flawed. In fact when thoroughly examined the case for continuation collapses. He refers to the triumphalist way in which 1 Corinthians 13 is rejected as a straight biblical argument for cessation of tongues and prophecies. But he is not deterred here either. The argument for cessation is still on the table and it is, he insists, a cogent argument. He even supplies his own paraphrase:

‘Love will never come to an end, since God himself is love; but special gifts like prophecy and speaking in tongues

and the word of knowledge will, since they are only temporary ways in which the God of love makes himself known to us. At the moment the knowledge of God we receive from prophecy, tongues and words of knowledge gives us only fragmentary knowledge of God. When we have the whole picture these gifts will give way – ‘when perfection enters, imperfection creeps away’; ‘the grown man puts away his baby toys’, as they say:

‘Tongues, words of knowledge, prophecies – they are all like looking into mirrors for which you Corinthians are so famous! But even a mirror with ‘Made in Corinth’ on it is a poor substitute for seeing (and therefore knowing) yourself as clearly as someone else can see and know you! But in the future, when we have the complete knowledge God has planned for us, we will not need to depend on these imperfect mirrors of tongues, words of knowledge and prophecy. Then we will know God completely, not merely in a fragmentary way – just as others know us.’ [The metal and glass mirrors of the first century did not give a perfect reflection – see *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, IVP.]

A criticism of the book is the use of complex vocabulary. It is needful with a theological subject of this nature to use words like paradigmatic but it would help to explain words and this would especially assist readers whose first language is not English.

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