

REFORMATION TODAY



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Philip Eveson and some students of LTS

CAREY 2000 – January 11th-14th

Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire

Conrad Mbewe:	Conference preacher
Geoff Thomas:	The Day of Salvation and C.H. Spurgeon
David Kingdon:	John the Baptist's View of Abraham's Children
John Campbell:	Moses, Jahweh and 2000
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Baruch Maoz:	Pastors and Elders
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Earl Blackburn:	Recovering the Vision
Jim Renihan:	The Holy Spirit and 2000

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Front cover: *Philip Eveson, Principal of the London Theological Seminary, and Seung Wook Kim of Korea and his wife taken on the occasion of the End of Year Service, June 12th 1999. Sixteen leaving students including seven from abroad gave brief testimonies. Some of these are featured in the photo above.*

Editorial

Bill James

This issue is devoted to the subject of spiritual discipline

Motivation to be disciplined

The Scriptures teach us with great clarity that the Christian life requires effort and discipline. For example, 'train yourself to be godly' (1Tim 4:7b). The Greek word conveys something of the discipline and intensity of the gymnasium. Or think of Hebrews 12:14, 'Make every effort ... to be holy'; the sense here is of pursuing holiness with all our might. Or in 2 Peter 1:5, 'Make every effort to add to your faith goodness...' There is no suggestion in these texts of a romantic view of the Christian life, where we will quite easily and naturally be godly without any struggle against sin. Certainly in Christ we have new minds and hearts - a new orientation to love and serve him. Yet we must also reckon with the malice of indwelling sin. There is still our enemy the devil to be confronted in spiritual warfare (Eph 6). And we are not exempt from the pressures to conform to the pattern of this world (Rom 12:1-2). So while we are in this world we will always be striving and struggling. We will always be subject here to that tension that while we are heirs of the kingdom of righteousness, yet we have not yet arrived. For now the flesh wars against the Spirit (Gal 5:17). We must still wait for that future hope of consummation when Jesus appears and 'we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is' (1 John 3:2).

Every believer who makes progress in the Christian way knows something of this requirement of spiritual discipline. We apply ourselves to the disciplines of prayer and Bible study, the disciplines of worship and service, the discipline of obedience, and restraining sinful desires. Yet even as we pursue these vital disciplines, we face another

danger. The more diligent we are, the greater risk we run of mere legalism. We continue with the motions of the spiritual disciplines, yet they may become for us a weary treadmill of religious performance.

This is why it is so vital to examine the matter of motivation. We must ask ourselves not only what we are doing but why we are doing it. If we are engaged in spiritual disciplines simply because of the pressure of our Christian peer group, or a slavish sense of obligation that only in performing these things will we attain to the favour of God, then we are legalists. Not only will the disciplines soon become a matter of dry and joyless routine, but we will be in danger of self-righteousness. When the legalist's 'performance' is good and his routine of discipline is operating like a well-oiled machine then he will be prone to spiritual pride and self-sufficiency. He will congratulate himself that he is making much progress. Then when his routine fails, or he is defeated in the struggle with sin he becomes inconsolable. He regards himself as a failure in the Christian life, and unable to expect or even hope for the blessing of God. The temptation now is just to throw in the towel. After all, he is convinced that he is unequal to the task and can never hope to attain to the high standards required of the Christian.

The biblical motivation to Christian living is very different. We live by grace not works. When we discipline ourselves we do not do so out of expectation that such exercises will gain the favour of God. Nothing we can do will ever gain God's favour; we are received solely on the basis of God's grace and mercy. We are always sinners, always falling short. Our confidence is never in our works. Rather, we pursue holiness out of a positive desire to be more like Christ. The new birth implants within our souls a measure of hatred of sin. We long to be rid of all impurity, all that defiles, all that has its roots in selfishness and pride, all that offends our Saviour. Instead, we desire to be filled with the fruit of righteousness. We long to be more and more like the Lord Jesus Christ. And when the Scriptures point us towards the means of prayer and the Word then we take these up and we pursue them that we might attain our end.

Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life

When our young people are baptised how well do we prepare them for the rigours of the Christian life? How well do we prepare them in spiritual disciplines? Are we faithful? Do we set them on the right track? Will they begin the race well, run well, and hit the tape well?

Editor

A personal testimony will illustrate the exposition which is to follow. In the 1950s I was a student in Pretoria, South Africa. Lyn, my girl friend from Johannesburg, told me one Saturday evening that she had suddenly been converted in a thunderstorm! My response was to affirm that we would attend church the next day, not morning service only but evening service as well! I had been converted some time previously but had very little understanding of the Bible and possessed very little idea of what it was to live a disciplined Christian life. I was more interested in sport. Lyn's conversion brought me to a firm decision that action was needed. I sensed that we would never progress spiritually if we were half-hearted about something so momentous as our eternal salvation.

Next morning and evening we attended church and kept our resolve to keep it up. We began to grow in our understanding. In due course we applied for baptism. At the same time we made a further decision that we would always attend the weekly prayer meeting. A further 'for always' resolution was to commit ourselves to be faithful in keeping all of the Lord's Day every Lord's Day. We did not understand it at the time but the Lord's Day is a wonderful institution. Just think of what keeping the Lord's Day provides: uplifting worship, biblical preaching to inspire, teaching to direct, united offering up of prayers, sharing burdens and joys with others, the centrality of Christ's propitiating death in the communion table, and included in our case, the opportunity to witness openly to the saving gospel of Christ in the open air. That is a considerable package!

We were baptised at the Pretoria Central Baptist Church in 1954. Before baptism discipleship was taught. We were grounded in basics, daily devotional life, service, witnessing, anti-worldliness and tithing to support the home church and missions, basics which we have never had reason to renounce or distance ourselves from. I need to add that we were given a very high esteem

for missionaries who sacrificed all to work in unevangelised fields. To us such were heroes and heroines.

Our principal form of service was to teach Sunday School. Our form of witnessing was to join the open air team which functioned every Lord's Day evening. Of the 16th century Reformation and the five points of Calvinism we had not the remotest idea.

Looking back I now ask the question, 'What motivated us?' Our grasp of things was governed mostly through single texts which contained a world of truth such as, 'You are not your own, you were bought at a price' (1 Cor 6:19). If Christ gave his all even to death on the cross and the shedding of his blood for me then I am his purchased possession to serve him according to his will. We sensed our lack of doctrinal teaching and lack of Church history which motivated our coming to England to work and study extra-murally at the inter-denominational London Bible College. At LBC we learned much but the most influential lecturer was Dr Ernest Kevan who taught Systematic Theology.

From 1955 to 1960 we were under the ministry of Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones at Westminster Chapel where there was a large regular congregation of about 1,200. A sermon by the doctor on the bondage of the will was one of the several nails hammered into the coffin of Arminianism which system we abandoned in due course. But it was Robert Haldane on Romans that converted me fully to the Reformed Faith. Banner of Truth books baptised us into detailed studies of the Reformation, the Puritans and the 18th-century Great Awakening.

Coming into the doctrines of grace was a powerful experience. But that experience did not alter in any way those first resolutions about faithfulness on the Lord's Day and attendance at the weekly prayer meeting. Rather they were confirmed and endorsed.

Motivation for a life of discipline

Now that I have travelled further down the road of Christian experience and understanding I believe that the best springboard by which to motivate the essential willpower to live in a disciplined way is Romans 12:1:

'Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship.' The *therefore* of Romans 12:1 is a way of looking back on the whole

Not by coercion

To be sure the Lord's army, unlike a national military force, is run by spiritual motivation. The authoritarian model of a church is analogous to the national military army basis, obey or else! The buzz word is 'principled obedience' which soon becomes formalism. Members are expected to be on time for every stated meeting. The children are expected to be neatly dressed. Everyone is expected to come with Bible in hand. Strict attention must be paid to the preacher. There is no place in such a church for the weak, the struggling and for stragglers just as there is no place for such in an army. If members do not conform or do not keep up they are placed under discipline or pressured to leave.

Paul sees the church differently. He exhorts that we should 'warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak and be patient with everyone' (1 Th 5:14). If conformity cannot be attained by peer pressure or eldership pressure how can it be attained? Spiritual discipline is essential to a person's well being. That is something that cannot be imposed or forced. It stems out of a personal relationship with the Trinity and is sustained by prayer and meditation. The progress of a church depends to a large degree on a sufficient number of believers who are spiritual and maintain a disciplined lifestyle combined with zeal to cooperate with others in team work.

Further factors with regard to a disciplined lifestyle concern upbringing and natural gifts. Some are privileged to have been brought up in an orderly disciplined way. To this can be added the factor of natural talent. When converted these natural advantages can be beneficial in structuring spiritual disciplines.

unfolding doctrine of salvation. The first thing to be settled is personal union with Christ. In coming into union with Christ by faith we are born again to eternal life. Once in union with Christ we can never be lost. Having come by grace into such a union we owe everything to him. In this context we can appreciate the words of our Lord, 'Any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple' (Luke 14:33), and, 'Anyone who does not take up his cross (death) and follow me is not worthy of me' (Matt 10:38).¹

What a profound mercy is union with Christ! As Paul shows in Romans six, through this union we receive at once both justification (the remission of all sins) and sanctification which involves the work of the Holy Spirit within to keep and progressively develop the life of faith. The Son of God secured a complete salvation for me! From an eternity of woe and wrath he saved me! My response can be summed up in the verse by Isaac Watts (1674-1748):

*Were the whole realm of nature mine
That were an offering far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all!*

Hence I offer my body as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God. The mercy shown to me is stupendous. It calls for a generous response. The mercies described by Paul are Trinitarian in character. My union with Christ is complete; I am one with him in his death and in his resurrection and present reign. My union with my Father is my union of adoption into an intimate family union in which he esteems me as his son and loves and cares for me (Rom 8:1-27). My union with the Holy Spirit is one in which he lives in me assuring me, enabling me to pray, and giving me the power to mortify sin (Rom 8:1-27).

When you experience the new birth and come to Christ in repentance and faith, it is right that believer's baptism should follow as a visible, public symbol of the great change in your life. The Trinitarian formula used in baptism is a safeguard to make sure that you understand the momentous nature of union with the three Persons as described above.

There is no better time than the time of your conversion and baptism to cement into your life permanent spiritual disciplines which you can develop and build up as you go forward into the future. What are these disciplines? Along the pattern indicated in my testimony above but with a slight re-organisation, I suggest three main headings:

1. The Lord's Day – public
2. The prayer meeting – public
3. Daily devotional life – private and family

1. *The Lord's Day – public*

I suggest that the first resolution of the new Christian is to dedicate himself to the Lord by making the most of the Lord's Day. This is a corporate exercise in which we share with other Christians. But first the question is, why this day? Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath. As such he has changed the day from the seventh to the first day of the week, the day of his resurrection. The first day of the week was the day in which he gave his Church the gift of the Holy Spirit. Pentecost was day fifty in the Feast of Weeks in the Jewish calendar and as such came on the first day of the week. In Revelation 1:10 the apostle John tells us that he was worshipping God in the Spirit when he received the revelation. He describes that day as 'the lordly Day', the day over which Christ has special jurisdiction. Of course he is ruler of all days but attention is being drawn to the fact that he is present as Lord when his people gather to worship him.²

How do we honour God in keeping this day? It involves giving and receiving. As we see what is involved we note that there are great blessings received in honouring the Lord on this day. What is involved?

i. *Public worship.* This is the highest and most sublime activity in which we can be involved. It consists of focusing on our Triune God and expressing our love, praise and gratitude. We render this worship as individuals together with others when we participate in singing, hearing and praying together.

ii. *Submission to the Word of God.* How are we to live? We are to live by every word that comes from the mouth of God (Deut 8:3). The most powerful way in which that Word is mediated to us is through preaching. Preaching is unique inasmuch as a preacher true to his calling addresses people in the wholeness of their beings: mind, affections, conscience and will. Expository preaching builds us up in our faith.

iii. *Fellowship with other believers.* Meeting for worship brings us together in fellowship with other believers in which we share burdens and joys. Sharing with others is a very important part of the Christian life.

iv. *At the Lord's table we express our dependence on Christ's propitiating death.* In doing this together we show our union with Christ and our union in the new covenant as he said, 'This is the new covenant in my blood shed for you.' In unity together we look forward to his return in glory.

2. *The prayer meeting – public*

The place and importance of the church prayer meeting can be seen from the opening chapters of the book of Acts. When the Church was threatened there was only one resource: united supplication. The evangelistic work and missionary enterprise of a church is born out of prayer and supported by prayer. If the activities and endeavours of a church are not the subject of prayer that indicates that God is not needed and we can be sure that those efforts will be futile. The Scripture says 'Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit says the LORD Almighty' (Zech 4:6), and when believers see this they will resort to united prayer. That requires a specific time when it is convenient for most to gather for united supplication.

This need for prayer and the prayer meeting brings into focus three disciplines which are part of every Christian's life and which call for united supplication.

i. *Service*. Service embraces all kinds of activities in the church: outreach and evangelism, support of missions, literature and radio work, teaching classes, taking care of and teaching children, the annual organisation of Holiday Bible Club for children, showing mercy in support of the elderly or handicapped, assisting with transport, serving meals, music ministry, accounting, secretarial work and administration commonly associated with deacons. The weekly church prayer meeting brings into focus the many activities of service in an average church.

ii. *Tithing*. In the Old Testament tithing was mandatory (Lev 10:30-33). Should we do less when Jesus says we must be prepared to give everything we have to be his disciples? Before the law was given, Abraham and Jacob illustrated the response of the believing and grateful heart expressed in tithing. Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils of war to Melchizedek, priest and king of Jerusalem (Gen 14:18-20; Heb 7:1-10 and Gen 28:20-22). The way to give systematically, proportionately and sacrificially is shown us in 1 Corinthians 16:1-2. 'On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come.' Tithing is a healthy discipline to ensure that we do not neglect our giving. However it is only basic. Those who prosper are able to give more and so the work of God will be well provided for, although it has often been noted that churches are really sustained by the faithful giving of those who have less than an average income.

iii. *Witnessing*. Witnessing is probably the most neglected discipline in the churches today. This is very much a local church discipline in which leadership and example are needed.

3. Daily devotional life – private and family

I began with a personal testimony and conclude in similar style by expressing gratitude for emphasis on the QT, 'Quiet Time', that was stressed to us as young converts. The greatest possible importance was laid on the necessity of setting a time aside every day for Bible reading and prayer. We were taught that it was essential to be watchful and to maintain this personal discipline. We were encouraged to use at least one of the many helps available by way of daily Bible reading schemes. Scripture Union notes seemed to be the most popular in the 1950s.

Depending on our family or home relationships there is the important place of family prayers and devotions. As with personal devotions there are different approaches to build this into one's lifestyle. Meditation (see article by Jim van Zyl) is a means of enrichment. Meditation as a discipline seems neglected in most Christian communities today except those which have rediscovered the theology and practice of the English Puritans. Don Whitney in his book *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, includes chapters which expound disciplines by which one's spiritual life can be strengthened, disciplines such as fasting, journaling (keeping a daily spiritual diary) and learning. By 'learning' he means study in a disciplined way. In good humour he suggests that such takes place by discipline not by accident.

The spiritual disciplines which bind us together into the fellowship of a local church, and personal devotions are closely allied. We should seek to excel in both. It is extremely beneficial to set off with a good start in the Christian life but even happier if we can end stronger and firmer in our Christian disciplines than when we began.

Concerning this theme it would be harder to find a more relevant passage than 2 Peter 1:5-11. Peter exhorts that every effort must be made to add to our faith. He declares that if we do these things we will never fall.

References

- 1 These words illustrate the ludicrous nature of the contention that a person can receive Christ as Saviour but not as Lord!
- 2 Since we have moved into the new covenant era we are not under ceremonial law. We are children of God by adoption and we enjoy freedom in the way we plan the Lord's Day. The principal matter is what we do rather than the time. For instance in Israel it is not practical for the Christians to meet on the first day so they meet on Saturday which is the Jewish Sabbath. They reason it is better to gather with ninety percent of the church members on Saturday than with only ten percent on Sunday.

The Disciplined Habit of Meditation

Jim van Zyl, Pinelands, Cape, South Africa

I believe passionately in the unique nature of Scripture. It is the Word of God breathed. Its unique nature requires that we come to it with reverence and with a different approach than to any other book. The Word of God is the basis of meditation. It is not designed for academic study but is intended to make us wise to salvation (2 Tim 3:15,16). Jahweh's direction to Joshua was, 'Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night... then you will be... successful' (Josh 1:8). Meditation is thinking about the Word and its implications. Thomas Watson defines meditation as the soul's retiring of itself, a serious and solemn thinking upon God, by 1. a locking out of the world, 2. a serious thinking upon God, and 3. the raising of the heart to holy affections.¹ It is the business of the godly person to delight in the law of the LORD and meditate in it day and night (Ps 1:2). Meditation, says Watson, 'is a friend to the graces; it helps water the plantation.' He cites Basil, 'Meditation is the treasury where all the graces are locked up.' Watson again: 'Meditation is the touchstone

of a Christian; it shows what metal he is made of.'²

However my objective is to concentrate on meditation as a specific discipline, something that I separate myself to and devote myself to completely at set times. My guess is that meditation of this kind is rare today. Everything about Western life militates against this kind of discipline.

For some time I have been meditating on the attributes of God but after each such session I go on to meditate on Psalm 23. My approach follows ground rules but I avoid becoming legalistic about my rules. Prior to meditation I seek the blessing of the Holy Spirit's illumination.

Then I determine as accurately as I can the meaning of the text. There are reliable linguistic guides and commentaries which can assist in this for those who are not proficient in Hebrew or Greek.

Meditation is a serious undertaking because I am separating myself from other interests to come to God



A lonely area of the Western Cape, South Africa. People living in country areas will have no difficulty in finding the solitude conducive to meditation

himself. The headings in the contents pages of Nathanael Ranew's book on meditation illustrate what I mean here: 'Meditation must be a serious thinking. It must be a searching and a scanning. It must be a dwelling of thoughts.' Ranew then outlines three affections: Desire, Love, Delight. He declares that we are in fact coming to God himself.³ Therefore I prepare myself to come apart from rush and pressure. Meditation requires a deep and passionate hunger to be spiritually nourished and fed 'in green pastures and beside still waters', to share at a table 'he has prepared for me' and to know communion so that 'my cup overflows'. Practical details are important. Thomas Manton preached ten sermons on the text, 'And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the even-tide.'⁴ Manton urges that meditation of this kind is the duty of Christians and draws out the signifi-

cance of a suitable place, the field, and the time, even-tide.

Meditation on a particular doctrine or biblical passage is a serious undertaking. One must not do this in a hurry. The Holy Spirit's presence is going to have a powerful impact upon my mind as I meditate on the truth. Thomas Watson suggests six attributes of God as profitable for meditation: omniscience, holiness, wisdom, omnipotence, mercy and truth. Watson also suggests further possible subjects for meditation: the promises of God, the evil nature of sin, Judgment Day, and hell.

I will now take the immutability (unchangeability) of God's love as an example.

Meditating on this divine attribute I know that although I am often buffeted and distracted and suffer

from swings of mood, God does not change. Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever. His love is as wide and as deep as the ocean. My Father has proved his love to me in redemption and in adoption. I am comforted that his love is immutable. It does not change. Furthermore when I feel appalling for physical reasons of illness his love is unchanged. Sometimes when I feel unspiritual and lifeless or numbed by bad news, even then his love has not changed. He is immutable in all his attributes. He is immutable in his love.

It is my preference to meditate on an attribute of God like that outlined above but to combine that with a very personal Psalm in which I seek to plumb the depth of every word. For instance alongside immutability I meditate on Psalm 23. The LORD is my shepherd. I think upon The LORD, the possessive adjective *my*, and how he *is my* shepherd. As part of meditation I ask questions and look for tangible answers. How does this truth assist me to understand the ways of God more? How does this help me to love my shepherd more? How does this truth apply to my daily circumstances, sorrows, disappointments, frustrations, anxieties? How does this

truth help me in my family relationships? Can this truth enrich my life of prayer? Does this truth help me to love other sheep? Does this reality correct me with regard to my sinfulness: my moodiness, impatience, my envy of others? Does this Scripture cure me of time-wasting, TV and unprofitable reading matter, and bring me rather to quiet waters and green pastures?

I sometimes compose a prayer like the following which I include by way of conclusion.

Prayer. *O LORD God Almighty, I praise and worship you in the splendour of your glorious, holy, unchangeable being. I rejoice greatly that you are immutable – the same yesterday, today and forever! In particular my heart is filled to overflowing and gratitude because your love to me and to your redeemed people is unchanging. I thank you for the profound assurance, certainty and stability that your immutable love imparts to my Christian life. Your gracious compassion will never be withdrawn. Accept my deep gratitude through our great High Priest and Intercessor, Jesus Christ our Lord.*

References

- 1 Thomas Watson, *Sermons*, Discourse on Psalm 1:2, Soli Deo Gloria, 1990, page 199.
- 2 Ibid, pages 261-2.
- 3 Nathanael Ranew, *Solitude Improved by Divine Meditation*, Soli Deo Gloria, 1995, pages 46ff.
- 4 Thomas Manton, *Works*, Vol 17, pages 263ff.

Resisting Adultery

Pastor Martin Holdt, Constantia Park Baptist Church, Pretoria, South Africa

I was a babe in Christ. The year was 1961. A pastor I knew had been having such a stunning ministry that many felt Billy Graham wasn't needed in South Africa. Then it happened. He resigned overnight. The cause? A fall into sexual sin. A fruitful ministry ended. A powerful testimony was all but destroyed. A church shattered by the fall of a man they considered to be the best preacher in the country, and the world was lapping up all the sensation. A man of the cloth had been downed by Satan. Soon afterwards, there was another shock. A denominational leader was felled by the same stroke. Numbed shock sent ripples threw the country. 'How are the mighty fallen!' The Philistines of the world were chuffed that another herald of truth was knocked out! Since then, it has happened again and again. Each time it does, and it happens far too frequently, we feel like calling out, 'How are the mighty fallen!'

The frequency with which this has happened in the past almost causes one to ask the question, 'Who is going to fall next?' When it happens it:

1. Discredits a ministry
2. Denies the keeping power of God
3. Brings the body of Christ into open shame
4. Serves as a pathetic witness to our younger people
5. Demoralises others in the ministry
6. Grieves the Holy Spirit and has Satan laughing.

It seems to get at the men who mean most to the Church. What a way to end a ministry. What a way to face the rest of life, and with what a stigma! Like David, a man after God's own heart may be forgiven, but the stain remains. At the end of his life, the entry for David's name in the divine chronicles would read something like this:

'David was a man after God's own heart except in the matter of Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah.'

Billy Graham once spoke of the 3 Fs which destroy a man's ministry, namely, Finance, Fame and Females.

We are here talking about the danger women may be to a man who is being used in the Christian ministry. This is

one of Satan's primary traps! He hates a powerful ministry and wants to neutralise it. One of his primary means is sexual entanglement. Behind many a female figure, behind a female who is not the pastor's wife and who poses as a prospect for 'fellowship', is the arch-enemy himself! In this regard, we need to take note of the words of Ephesians 6: 12: 'For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.'

We look at a few passages of Scripture, which deal with the temptation and the sin.

A. Joseph: In his case he resisted temptation forthrightly. We note some of the salient features in the story:

1. It was precisely when he was successful that the stage was set for a moral collapse (Gen 39:34). When success is either in the blossom or the bloom danger lurks! This has been

the case with many a pastor and Christian worker.

2. The temptation came from without. Potiphar's wife herself took the initiative, not Joseph. Genesis 39:7, 'And after a while his master's wife took notice of Joseph and said, 'Come to bed with me!' The same holds true today. A man is noticed by a woman, advances are made, followed by subtle attempts to lure the man into an emotional bond.

3. Joseph resisted in the first place by refusing to defraud another man. We notice his reference to Potiphar as he insists, 'You are his wife' (Gen 39:8-9a). When the apostle Paul urges his readers to flee sexual immorality, he refers to the sin as, amongst other things, defrauding someone else (1 Thess 4:3-7).

4. His effective resistance was the result of two principal factors:

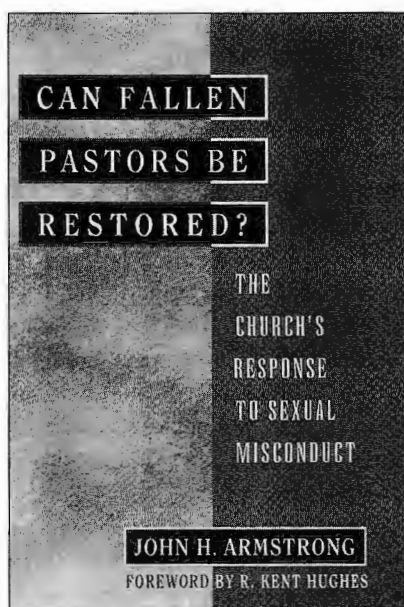
a. A thorough awareness of the heinousness of sin.

It is advantageous to the local church when women's gifts are recognised and used, especially so in counselling. The book *Women Helping Women: A Biblical Guide to the Major Issues Women Face*, is commended. Harvest House Publishers, OR, USA, 1997, eds. Elyse Fitzpatrick and Carol Cornish, available in the UK through STL, £11.50.

b. A cultivated consciousness of the holiness of God. It is impossible to sin when these are dominant factors in a person's mind and heart. A study of the Puritans' exposition of the biblical teaching of sin and the holiness of God will pay enormous dividends to any pastor or Christian worker. Nothing could be a greater deterrent against the evil of immorality.

5. Though temporarily set back for his faithfulness, the rewards of obedience were terrific! The rest of the story of Joseph bears this out. He had to wait for it, but it did come. Following Jesus' temptation, and the strong resistance to the devil's overtures to break from the Father's will, angels attended him. (Matt. 4:11). Is the reward promised in James 1:12 not perhaps a reward this side of the grave in addition to what follows after death, as the ministry is enhanced and empowered by a steadfast resistance to temptation?

An often overlooked fact in the story of Joseph's resistance to the temptation Potiphar's wife posed, is that according to Genesis 39:16 he even refused 'to be with her'. Too many men court disaster when they spend time alone with women when common sense alone tells them that they should avoid close physical contact.



The cover of the book reviewed on page 31

B. David: What led to his fall, this great man after God's own heart?

It did not begin with David seeing Bathsheba naked from the rooftop of the palace. It began with a spiritual decline. Roger Ellsworth has written: 'David allowed the fire of devotion to God to burn low. Sin is always born in a damp, chilly heart. Omission usually precedes commission.' Casual Bible reading, sloppy praying is a welcome sign for sin. The devotional life for a man of God regularly maintained is *vital* to building up an immune system against temptation and sin.

Then there was ingratitude! God had done so much for him. God had

brought him from obscurity. He had raised him to be a king. He had given him the promise that the Messiah would be among his descendants. Here he was in the palace with a cold heart. He rises from his nap (indicative of his spiritual condition) and walks onto his roof. He once did resist temptation! David had been tempted twice to end Saul's life and to deal with a man who was hounding and trying to destroy him. David had resisted then, but not now! Instead of quickly looking away and looking to God, he looks again, and again and stares. Desire grows. 'When tempted, no-one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone' (James 1:13-14).

David sent for the woman. En route God himself sends a check to his conscience in the servant's report when David is told, 'She is married to Uriah the Hittite.' But David thinks of that once only.

Was Bathsheba blameless? Why bathe in the sight of the palace? Why did she not reject David's advances?

The rest of the story is known. There is an attempted cover up. The solemn note must be taken to heart, 'The thing that David had done displeased the LORD.'

Lessons from David's sin:

1. You are never too old to be caught up in a horrendous sin like this. He had walked with God for a long time. Many older people have fallen into sexual sin, after a lifetime of keeping their chastity. 'If any man thinks he stands let him beware lest he fall!'

2. We are to keep up our relationship with God, and are not to tolerate a single day's spiritual decline. Freshness in communion with God is a vital necessity to the maintenance of the holy walk and a resistance to evil.

3. We are to be careful what we see. Women should be cautious as to what they show. It is inexcusable to see sexually explicit films and suggestive TV shows, not to speak of pornographic magazines. In that respect, we do not need to be enlightened about the world of sin. We know enough about it to be angered at the very thought of that which provokes God's righteous indignation.

4. You cannot hide sin. David's sin came out into the open, for God saw to that! The sin of sexual immorality will come out in the end, if not in this life, then certainly in the next.

5. The consequences are always horrific. In the case of David, there were serious family tragedies related directly to his sin, and they brought untold misery to him and to others.

C. The wonderful book of Proverbs

Can anyone seriously and regularly feed his soul on this book and fall? It is dynamic! It is so descriptive. For example:

1. It describes the stages that lead to sexual fornication and the consequences in chapter 5:1-6. There is flattery, preparation, and an intelligent plan designed to trap the candidate for sin. How foolish some men can be!

2. The book of Proverbs appeals for a commitment, spiritually and sexually, to a man's one and only wife (Prov 5:15-19). Do those of us who are married spend enough time with our wives – praying with them and enjoying their company?

3. A daily, good intake of God's Word is the antidote against this sin. Among other sections see Proverbs 6:23-29. It is significant that in this section the Scriptures (v23) become the antidote against sin. Years ago when a well-known evangelical leader shared with me the tragic moral lapse which had led to his resignation from his responsible position, he humbly and honestly added that it had all happened because he had neglected to read the Scriptures and to pray on a daily basis. When the late Bob Sheehan was visiting South Africa, he remarked that research had proved

that the same neglect had led to several ministers falling into the same sin in the United Kingdom.

4. It cautions against the evil designs of the woman who puts herself in the way of temptation to lure a man into sin (Prov 7:6-27). A careful study of the passage will yield enormous dividends. Note again the flattery with which the woman attracts the attention of the man she wants to have. She also assures him that she has a safe place for the sexual encounter, for no one else will know. She has certainly done her homework! She seems to have checked her husband's travel plans very carefully, including the amount of money he has taken with him, and she is satisfied that it will never be discovered that she slept with another man. The tragic consequences are given by divine inspiration in dramatic fashion.

The New Testament is no less candid about a sin that has destroyed millions. Our Lord goes to the source where it all begins, namely fantasy, entertaining thoughts that are not summarily dismissed, and he then advises radical surgery, spiritual surgery, which calls for drastic action, immediately and urgently whenever there is a threat (Matt 5:27-30).

Men called to the ministry have only one life, and one ministry. We are not

to destroy a gift which God has given by foolish thoughts and actions.

Conclusion

How does one prevent it from happening?

1. We are to ensure daily, fresh communion with God at the highest level. This is our duty, and it ought to be our delight.

2. There is the need for constant vigilance. We are to be discerning and aware of inordinate advances, suggestions, and particularly flattery, which may appear to be so spiritual! When a lady whose motives I strongly suspected told me that Psalm 45:2 reminded her of me, my angry reaction at her having used a Messianic reference to compliment me prompted her counter-reaction, 'I don't care!' If anything revealed her true state of mind it was that. There are enough women determined to woo and win the affections of pastors for men in Christian service to be extra cautious.

3. We are to be discerning about the motives of those seeking counsel. Why do they really want to see you? Perhaps we need to be as firm as one man was once when after a lady had come to see him for the third time about the same problem, he asked her with a good degree of discernment,

'Whom do you want, the Lord or me?'

4. We are to be distrusting of our own hearts, while discerning about the danger signals. A general practitioner who is a personal friend has described the importance for him of differentiating amongst his female patients between those who are genuinely ill and in need of medical treatment, and those who have psychosomatic problems and who sometimes come to his surgery with ulterior motives. The minister's clientèle includes many whose motives are not always purely spiritual.

5. We are to cultivate the habit of meditating about God and his attributes more frequently than we have in the past. He sees, he knows everything about us and he is not passive to what we do.

6. Limit your counselling sessions to only that which is absolutely necessary. The place where you do it must be accessible, and visible to your wife or to any other occupant in the house. Always leave the door open, and ensure that anyone who wishes may see from the outside what you are doing.

God help us resist the temptation Satan is making to destroy us and our ministry. The Lord Jesus Christ be glorified in pure, holy and godly living, for his name's sake.

News

Kosovo

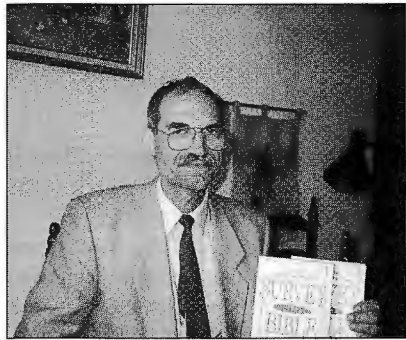
*News received from Simo Ralevic in Pec,
15th June*

Simo Ralevic fled from his home in Pec with his immediate family including his 85 year old mother. Other members of his family are safe in Northern Yugoslavia. Simo left behind his home, his library, church building and book warehouse. He reports that in spite of destruction all around him, his own buildings have so far been preserved. Simo's family has lived in the area for 200 years and he has maintained his ministry and literature work for over 30 years. Simo has preached to Serbs and Albanians alike and his literature has been sent out in all the languages of Yugoslavia. Not surprisingly, Simo wept as he left his home. He now with many other Serbs is living in stressful poverty. Simo declares that with death and destruction all around he finds comfort in Psalm 91 and Isaiah 40.

Macedonia

*A report by the editor on the work of
Branko Trajkovski*

This week brought a spiritual tonic when we were visited by a friend of about 20 years, a bachelor, and pure Macedonian. Macedonians number about 2 million throughout the world with their own language and culture. Half a million live outside Macedonia especially in Canada and Australia but some in Greece.



Branko Trajkovski

This small nation has been neglected with the result that Christian literature is about zero. The thrice dead orthodox Macedonians hate the gospel with a passion and work relentlessly to exclude gospel light which they deride as 'Protestantism'.

The first paramount need is for the Scriptures. Our friend is supported by Cuckfield Baptist Church. He lives at Bitola where he has devoted himself to gospel propagation, especially translation. He has succeeded by working with other linguists to translate the whole Bible into Macedonian. Dutch churches have financed the printing of 40,000 copies but these Bibles will have to be smuggled into Macedonia because the orthodox will block the way.

I have never suggested any man to be an apostle but at our weekly prayer meeting I introduced Branko as a modern apostle because his vision for his people has

resulted in extraordinary labour. Beside the translation of the OT (completing the whole with others completing the NT), Branko has translated Hendriksen's Survey of the Bible which is a crucial book for people who need to know basic facts concerning the different books of the Bible. This work is being printed in Macedonia.

Also translated and published by Branko and now circulating among the Macedonians are an abridgement of Calvin's *Institutes*, and *Not Guilty*, the Grace Publications modern language abridgement of James Buchanan's work on justification by faith alone. Other translations ready to go to the printer are Foxe's *Martyrs* (500 pages) and *The 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith*. Also, by way of defence against the feminist movement, *Let Me be a Woman* by Elizabeth Elliot.

Macedonia is a nation that has been kept locked up in pre-Reformation darkness. Described above are materials of stupendous power, mostly Bible exposition; a fine book of how to understand the Bible, a vital work on justification by faith, a brief systematic theology and Foxe's record of the martyrs of the Reformation period which was the key factor in turning England to be Protestant.

What a privilege the Lord has conferred on Branko, and on us to pray for him and support him and fellow Reformed ministers in areas where Nato planes have daily roared low over his home on their missions of destruction leaving the whole Baltic area aflame with ongoing ethnic hatred. It is quite simplistic to demonise one group. Our work is to pray

for peace and to support practically the suffering refugees, recognising the unique opportunity this is for the entrance of the gospel as has already been the case across the formerly atheist Albania since the Revolution.

Philippines

*Christian Compassion Ministries –
a report from Brian Ellis*

God willing we are hoping to begin the construction work on the new children's home by the end of this week. We do not have the final building permit yet but have been encouraged to go ahead with above ground work of preparing the site for the construction.

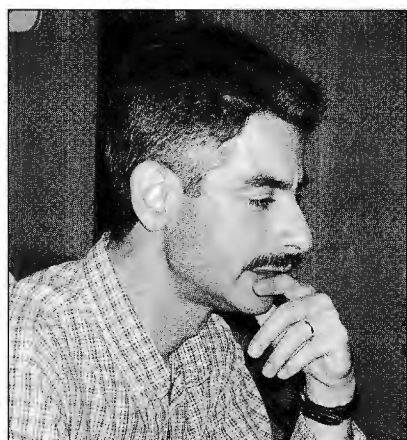
The work is being undertaken by Edgar Agda who has his own construction company, with David Mitchell from Australia who has been here some years overseeing construction projects for the Reformed Baptist churches. David will also be acting as inspector of the project. Edgar is a member of a sister Reformed Baptist church.

The building is L-shaped and consists of four terraced houses, one of the houses being almost twice as large as the others having an office, library/classroom, and sick room as well as a large meeting/multi-purpose room. We expect the project to go forward in stages as the Lord provides financially. The whole project will probably cost about L.75,000 (US\$125,000). We would like to erect the larger home and one smaller one by June if possible with an estimated cost of L.47,000 (US\$78,000). We have approximately L.28,000 (US\$45,000) in hand with which we are beginning the construction.

We would ask prayer for the completion of the building permits. There has been some delay about right of way to enter the sub-division but we believe that that should be ironed out today. These delays are typical here.

Please pray that the project will go ahead and that most of our girls will be able to move into the facility even if initially crowded by June which is the beginning of the new school year.

South Africa



Roland Eskinazi

A report from South Africa by Pastor Roland Eskinazi who will be the main speaker at the Carey Family Conference in Shropshire this August. Roland has recently received a call to Goodwood, Cape Town. He has pastored the Germiston Baptist Church for 9 years and will commence the new ministry in January 2000. Bernard Cartledge, the former minister at Goodwood has taken up the pastorate of The Evangelical Free Church in Harrogate, N Yorkshire.

In the important election in South Africa the ANC did not get the two thirds majority needed to change the Constitution. The African Christian Democratic Party trebled its support on a national level, winning 1.49% of the vote and 6 seats in the national parliament. ACDP President Kenneth Meshoe says he is happy with the outcome. At the time of writing the ACDP had won seats in 5 provincial legislatures – Western Cape, KwaZulu, Natal, Gauteng, Northern Province, Eastern Cape.

In a statement made today (Saturday 5 June), President Meshoe said that he believes the party's victory is a sign that concern for moral issues is increasingly becoming a force for the betterment of society. President Meshoe said, 'I believe that this heralds a return to the true sense of the word community whereby there is the realisation that no individual's personal choices do not have a bearing on the community as a whole.

'The ACDP does not believe that any religion or that morality should be legally enforced by the state, but rather that the laws of the country should reflect the moral norms of the nation. ...The only way to uplift society is by strengthening its most basic building block – the family.

'Christian democracy is on the increase in many parts of the world and this victory is a reflection of that. Democracy is going back to its roots, which is the belief that the loving God created all men equal. The ACDP hopes that this victory will alert government to the fact that the concerns of moral realists need

to be taken seriously. Christians are concerned about the degradation of society. The demon of apartheid has been torn down. But in its place Christians will not tolerate violence, including violent crime and abortion; a lack of personal responsibility and accountability which includes an unjust penal system and corruption; and the breakdown of the family and the dignity of women through pornography and the proposed legalisation of prostitution.

'Draft legislation is already in place that proposes to legalise doctor-assisted suicide and give recognition to so-called gay families, which to any clear thinker is a biological impossibility. For the ACDP it is back to hard work. We pledge to all God-fearing citizens of South Africa ...We will be vigilant and continue to fight in the political sphere against the breakdown of society.'

Reverend Meshoe called on all Christians to become practically involved in uplifting society by supporting organisations that offer a hand to the weaker members of our society – the unborn, street children, abused women, the sick, the poor and the elderly.

Namibia

A report from Pastor Joachim Rieck of Eastside Baptist Church, Windhoek, concerning a new Afrikaans Reformed Baptist church

On the 14th February we constituted our 'Afrikaanse Gereformeerde Baptiste Kerk' with 12 members, 5 of whom were baptised on that occasion by Pastor Jacobus de Koning. It was a moving service. The testimonies of the members

brought tears to many eyes! It is encouraging that there is already a fair bit of depth in terms of potential leadership. There are also at least 10 more people who are coming to this church on a regular basis, and have perhaps adopted a 'wait and see' attitude or are still not convinced about believer's baptism.

The AGBK will stay under our roof at Eastside, even though they are now an autonomous church. We envisage a happy co-operative spirit between the two churches. Jacobus and I certainly are of one heart and one mind as far as our theological views are concerned.

Indonesia

A report from Amin Tjung



Amin Tjung

Under Soeharto, about 550 churches were burnt. In 1 year under Habibie, about 250 churches were burnt. Chinese people have many problems in Indonesia. If the Islamic Fundamentalists win the election we will have more. If the Nationalist party wins we will still

be free to worship and share the gospel. But we praise the Lord through all.

Please pray for Indonesian leader, Stephen Tong. He works unrelentingly and still leads rallies in several cities. He will lead an Indonesian rally in Singapore on 17-19 September 1999. During August 1999, Rev. Tong will preach every week in Singapore. He undertakes regular commuting by plane between Jakarta, Singapore and Bahasa, Indonesia, giving Bible expositions in Chinese and preparing missionaries for the Chinese world.

Rev. Tong is also associated with the Reformed Institute in Washington D.C. We will start summer courses in Chinese this June. Rev. Tong will teach 4 subjects (in five weeks). Every weekend for 4 or 5 weeks he will lead a rally in a different city, some in Chinese and some in English.

Currently at the Reformed church which I am serving now in Palembang about 60-70 people come every Sunday. We started from zero two and a half years ago. Some people have a Muslim background, most are from a Buddhist background. We share the gospel with many people. Now I have an assistant pastor in Palembang. Our Reformed Evangelical Theological School in Palembang has prepared more than 100 Christians, 5 of whom attained Diploma and 10 qualified for Certificate in Christian Studies. Pray for this too.

I am also overseeing a church in Singapore which commenced last year. By May 140 people were attending. I also started a new fellowship in Batam at the beginning of May. This group

includes 12 members who have moved from Jakarta. Pray for this new fellowship.

So I am now pastoring three churches. I teach 3 weekdays and preach 2 weekends in Palembang. Every month I preach on 2 Sundays in Singapore. I will be teaching the Westminster Shorter Catechism, lead the prayer meeting and youth fellowship, prepare Sunday School teachers for their work, lead a Bible study. I lead a small group and fellowship along similar lines as Sunday worship in Batam.

Please pray for me as well. I need God's help, wisdom and strength to take care of my family too. My wife and I have 3 sons; she and the boys remain in Palembang.

USA

Chapel Library's literature and prison ministry

Chapel Library, Pensacola, USA continues to enjoy a wide effectual ministry in supplying expository materials to developing countries. Recent publications include evangelical tracts in Spanish (eight million evangelistic tracts), the free distribution of 10,000 books in Spanish, tracts in Polish and *The 1689 Confession* in Maltese.

A prompt service of expository materials is maintained to 4,619 inmates in 828 prisons. Study aids are especially popular. Materials have been supplied to 223 prison chaplains for prison libraries. Complicated restrictions which apply to different prisons are computerised and with the help of a top-notch team all mail



*Bill Noonkesser (left) working on a manuscript with pastor LeeRoy Shelton, Jr
at Chapel Library*

requests are posted the second day after they are received. Between 300 and 400 letters from prisoners are answered weekly. All the literature is Reformed in character. It is encouraging when reports are received of chaplains teaching Reformed doctrines.

Reformed Baptist Mission Services (RBMS)

Bob Selph, secretary, reported in June on the situation of his predecessor

David Straub has suffered a number of seizures in the past week and a half. The past several days have been better. With the encouraging scans that revealed his tumors had not been growing, he had stopped taking the steroids he has been on. After one day the seizures began to hit. David spent four days in the hospital at Hershey. He is home now and gaining some strength back, although he is very weak. He is back on the steroids (which have miserable side effects such as

depletion of leg muscles, increasing appetite, added body weight, tiredness, need for sleep, etc) and he is taking the full dosage of anti-seizure medication.

Two of David's sons, Steve and Nathan, were baptised in May and his eldest son, Jonathan was married in Cape Cod, Massachusetts, on June 12th. Let us pray for much grace for David and Susan, that they will experience the joy of sharing in these most significant family events.

Spurgeon's Conference, May 99 William Jewell College, Kansas City, Missouri

Erroll Hulse

In 1909 Spurgeon's Puritan Library, reputed to be the best personal collection in the world, was advertised for sale. A bid from the William Jewell College was accepted. Recently a lively committee has been active to repair and widen the use of Spurgeon's Puritan Library. In



Gregg Wills (left) and James Grier, speakers at the Spurgeon's Conference

addition, over the last eight years, four conferences have been organised. The organiser is Pastor Gary Long of Springfield, Missouri. The conference draws attendees from a wide area. This time the visiting American speakers were Dr James Grier of Grand Rapids and historian Gregg Wills from Southern Seminary. My contribution was to explain the Puritan era and show how Spurgeon was an heir of the Puritans. For one day the Southern Baptist Historical Society joined the conference and it was then that I presented my paper 'Spurgeon and the Downgrade Controversy'. I must testify that several months' researching in this subject have been very rewarding. The work of preserving and developing our historical legacies is important. I have always believed that the portfolio of Church history in any Bible seminary is vital.

Spurgeon made his stand against the rising modernism of his times, 1887 - 1892. Modernism represents the third

great sustained attack of Satan on Christianity. The first battle was waged in the early centuries over the person of Christ and the Trinity. The next was the subversion of the doctrine of salvation over a number of centuries so that it was buried under a mountain of heresy. Later Luther and the Reformers recovered the doctrine of justification by faith alone. (Compromising forensic justification in favour of a fusion of justification and sanctification is the very essence of Roman Catholic thinking about salvation.) The third attack was designed to destroy confidence in the Bible. This battle is far from over, even though modernistic theories have been discredited. We have benefited from a theological renewal and the rise of capable theologians. But to return to Spurgeon: he was a busy pastor/preacher/evangelist and could only draw attention to the decline in doctrinal fidelity. It was given to others to take up what he called the greatest fight in the world.

Just Looking! Alternatives to Alpha

*Pastor David Sprouse, Cuckfield Baptist Church, West Sussex, UK. This article first appeared in the April 1999 **Grace Magazine**, 72 Crewes Road, Child's Hill, London NW2 2AD*

Whatever we may conclude about the emphasis and contents of the much publicised, much criticised *Alpha* course, its basic strategy and ethos ought not to be dismissed. As long as we imagine that simply to advertise and hold meetings and services each Sunday expecting unbelievers to come in their hordes or even in ones and twos, our churches, more likely than not, will decline and close. Indeed the principles and examples laid down in the New Testament call on us to have evangelistic strategies that cause us to engage our communities with strategies which are even, dare I say, imaginative and innovative.

One thing that is clear from responses to *Alpha* is that there are people in our communities who are interested in serious Bible study! I know of an Elim church in Coventry where 30 signed up for *Alpha* and of a church in the North East where 60 came. A number of good alternatives to *Alpha* have been produced (in some cases before *Alpha* was written), courses where the unchurched unbeliever can be led



David Sprouse

clearly and simply through the gospel.

Although I have looked at many, I have yet to find one better than *Christianity Explained*. The course, which we advertise under the title *Just Looking!* comprises six studies, to which I have added a seventh introductory study. Each session lasts about an hour, including ample time for discussion, comment and questions. The studies are provided with fairly full notes and helpful illustrations (mostly verbal not pictorial!). By the end the participant will have read through the whole of Mark's Gospel and have been presented with a clear overview of who Jesus is, the

significance of his death and resurrection, what it means to repent and believe and the implications of the truth that we can be saved only by grace. The manual also has photocopying masters for handouts and answers to the 20 most asked questions on Mark. Also included in the manual are ideas on how the course may be advertised and used. From my own experience and conversations with others the following approach seems best.

1. Befriend unbelievers

A frightening statistic I came across some time ago suggests that within five years of conversion the average believer has lost all contact with unbelievers! How can we be salt and light if no-one knows us? Who will ask us the reason for the hope that we have if they don't know us? People are far more likely to respond to an invitation to a meeting or a course if they know us and discover that we are normal people and if they are personally invited and are actually brought. Pray for your local unbelieving neighbours and friends on a daily basis and genuinely seek to get to know them.

2. Invite them!

Most people who do a *Just Looking!* course or similar, are prompted to do it having first come to some special meeting in the church, where interest

is awakened. This varies from family fun days to harvest suppers, to Remembrance Day, Easter and Christmas services. The words of Philip to Nathanael are well known, but probably ought to be more frequently spoken by us, *Come and see* (John 1:46).

3. Make clear what you are offering

At special meetings and other suitable occasions we encourage unbelievers to consider the course. We have printed a card that we hand out as well so that they can read exactly what it is we are offering. We make it clear that we are offering an informal Bible study course and not an initiation ceremony into the Baptist Church!

4. Don't be afraid to study with individuals or couples

Having a study with 30 unbelievers does sound very exciting, but actually doing a study course with an individual or a couple does have distinct advantages. Studying with individuals means that you can build a relationship with the person and that you are more likely to get honest responses to straight questions! It also enables you to tailor the studies to suit the individual's academic ability and spiritual background or lack of it. One striking aspect of the word-ministry of Jesus is how much of it occurred in

the context of debate or in answer to an objection or question, sometimes with small groups, sometimes with individuals, as well as with great crowds. That most preaching and word-ministry in our churches has little place for such should give serious cause for review!

5. Stick to your plan!

Whilst it may be necessary to split a study into two because of questions that arise, it is important to ensure that the course is brought to a clear conclusion. The *Christianity Explained* course provides a review questionnaire that is completed as a part of the last study. This enables a clear challenge to be given, an assessment of where a person is at, and ensuring that the studies do not become an end in themselves.

6. Pray and encourage others to pray

Expect that, as it is taught and explained, God's Word will change lives and pray that this will happen. There are few things comparable to seeing such prayer answered.

Much of my thinking in this year was gleaned from Gary Benfold and the three years I spent as his assistant at Aylesbury. During that time Gary ran many such study courses, usually with groups and nearly all of the many people from 'outside' the

church who came to faith did so at or after those studies. The numbers I have studied with here over the last year have not been vast, but there have been conversions and there is at present a steady stream of requests to do the course.

So *Alpha* is not for us! But if we want to see people converted, we must ensure that the principles and passion that brought about *Alpha* produce something in our churches which is relevant as well as sound! Roger Carswell defines evangelism as 'preaching (in the broadest sense) the gospel to non-Christians who are listening'. We do well to ask at the end of each year, even each month, how many people have actually listened to the gospel as a result of our efforts!

Resources

St Matthias Press, PO Box 665, London SW20 8RL tel 0181 942 0880

- *Christianity Explained* – complete manual including six studies in Mark
- *Simply Christianity* – five studies in Luke (full leaders' manual and student pack available)
- *Investigating Christianity & Tough Questions* – two sets of evangelistic Bible Studies (no accompanying notes)
- *Just for Starters* – seven studies for the new believer

Onesimus Books, PO Box 463, Bristol BS99 1DH tel John Hall 01454 313459

Christian Basics – 12 studies introducing the Christian faith aimed at interested unbelievers and young Christians. It has been produced by Dr John Hall and retails at £1.75 post free.

Matthew Henry – early disciplines

Don Haddleton, Thornleigh, NSW, Australia

Matthew Henry is justifiably famous because of the commentary that bears his name; a work that was completed for him after his decease on the basis of his notes. C H Spurgeon recommended the reading of this valuable commentary at least once each year – a prodigious read!

The warmth and depth of spiritual insight and understanding displayed in Henry's commentary is not the product of a 'late in life' conversion, nor of casual and superficial Bible study. Rather it stems from a deep work of grace beginning early in life and improved upon and developed by diligent Bible study and a life of prayerful application of the truths gathered and collated.

Notes written in his own handwriting witness to a work of grace at the age of ten. At the age of thirteen he wrote, 'I think it was three years ago that I began to be convinced, hearing a sermon by my father on Psalm 51:17... I think it was that which melted me; afterwards I began to enquire after Christ.' In a further note in his diary dated December 7th 1675 he wrote, 'On a Sabbath morning, I heard a sermon that had in it the true marks of grace; I tried myself by them and told my father my evidences; he liked them and told me, if those evidences were true (as I think they were), I had true grace. Yet after this, for two or three days, I was under great fear of hell, till the Lord comforted me. Having been engaged in serious examination, what hopes have I when I die and leave this earthly tabernacle, I shall be received into heaven? I have found several marks that I am a child of God. His ministers say there is true conversion:

1. When there have been covenant transactions between God and the soul... If I never did it before, I do it now; for I take God and Christ to be mine, I give myself up to be his in a bond of everlasting covenant, never to be forgotten... As far as I know my own heart, I do it in truth and sincerity... I do it every day.
2. Where there has been true repentance for sin, and grief and shame and sorrow for it as to what is past, with all the ingredients of it, as confession, aggravation, self-judging, self-condemning... I have found this in me, though not in the measure I could desire. I have been heartily sorry for what is past...

blushing for shame that I should ever affront him as I have done... I do really believe that I am forgiven for Christ's sake. This is grounded on Proverbs 28:13; Isaiah 1:18; 55:7; Matthew 5:4; Acts 2:37; 3:19 and I John 1:9. But has my sorrow been true? - As far as I know my own heart it has... But I sin often - I lament and bewail it before the Lord and endeavour by the grace of God to do so no more.

3. Where there is true love of God... As far as I know my own heart I love God in sincerity... for,

i. I love the people of God,

ii. I love the Word of God... desire it for my soul... delight in it... love the messengers of the Word... am often reading it,

iii. I am grateful for temporal mercies... when I was born most thought I would not live... and the Lord preserved me... I have had a good education and was taught early to read my Bible...'

This document written by Matthew Henry's own hand at the age of 13 is remarkable in his proficient and wise use of Scripture which he is able to search out and apply to his own case to determine if he himself was 'in the faith'. Having done so he rested on the infallible Word of God rather than on fleeting emotions. Even at such a young age he knew himself and knew the waywardness of the human heart... its leaning towards corruption, disobedience and deceit...

He was also aware of God's gracious providences, being saved from death as a child. After serious illness in 1668 he wrote, 'I had health, and began to learn my grammar. Blessed by God that he gave me understanding!'

The young Henry loved God's people and loved the Word of God... to read it, hear it expounded, this was his pleasure and his food and that love overflowed toward those who preached it faithfully.

The commentary written by the mature Matthew Henry is not only an exposition of Scripture but a testimony to the early spiritual disciplines built into his life. Would that in this day we would see examples of such Christianity among teenagers and young people.

Note: All quotations are taken from *An Account of The Life and Death of Matthew Henry*, collated out of his own papers by Rev William Tong published by W Phorson, E Law and Son, London 1794.

Book Reviews

Spiritual Disciplines within the Church

Donald S Whitney; Moody Press, 1996
216 pages

Many readers of RT will be familiar with Don Whitney's first book: *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (NavPress, 1991 – see review in RT 128). This is a refreshing encouragement to disciplined discipleship. Whitney draws on the resources of our Reformed and Puritan heritage, yet presents his material in a fresh and well-illustrated fashion. In addition to the central disciplines of prayer, Bible study, worship and service, we are encouraged to consider fasting, silence and solitude, and keeping a spiritual journal.

Whitney has produced this companion volume: *Spiritual Disciplines within the Church* which focuses on our responsibilities in the local church setting. This provides a helpful emphasis on church life in an individualistic age.

The opening chapters present the biblical case for church-going, baptism, and church membership. Then in subsequent chapters Whitney presents the various responsibilities of church membership including listening to preaching, fellowship, corporate prayer, and service. The final chapter gives advice on how to find a good church, emphasising the importance of

sound teaching and spiritual life.

The book will be challenging to 'lone Christians' and an encouragement to all to be more diligent in their responsibilities to the local church.

Bill James

Can Fallen Pastors be Restored? –

The Church's Response to Sexual Misconduct

John H Armstrong, Moody Press, 1995, 204 pages

In his endorsement of this book Albert Mohler, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary writes, 'America is an increasingly pagan culture, and we can now see the curse of an increasingly pagan church. The scandals which have plagued American Christianity over the past decade have brought shame and disrepute upon the Church – when ministers of the gospel fall into sin, the integrity of the Church is called into public question. John Armstrong has left no stone unturned yet he has thrown no stones at fallen brothers.'

Opposite views to those of the author are fairly stated and refuted. The reasons presented against restoration to the pastoral ministry of those who fall into adultery are compelling. The sin in question is described as 'a heinous sin of incredible rebellion against the Lord of the Church'. 1 Corinthians 9:24-27

which concerns the subject of disqualification is expounded. The author opens up the dangers of staying in office. 'Men who fall sexually while in pastoral ministry generally should remove themselves immediately, if for no other reason than to make sure that they protect themselves from further failure that often recurs if they remain in office. ...the danger of apostasy is so serious that I am convinced that men who fall sexually while in the ministry should remove themselves immediately' (p 103).

A chapter is devoted to guarding against misconduct. Here are some quotations from the final chapter, 'Six proposals and a plea for reformation'. 'If the modern church is to recover again the marks of the visible church she must restore the discipline of her pastors to the top of her agenda.' and 'Associations and denominations of churches need to establish, maintain, and support the kinds of initiatives that will allow and encourage proper investigation of all charges of moral failure. ...When charges of moral misconduct are proven to be true, the leaders must properly tell the congregation.' 'If repentant the goal is to aid the former pastor in restoration to God, to a local church, and to a proper relationship with his family; it is not restoration to his former office.'

This is a relevant book, very practical, balanced, and highly recommended.

Editor

The Godly Man's Picture –

The Marks of a Man who is Going to Heaven

Thomas Watson, Banner of Truth, 251 page paperback

Here is Watson at his very best. He defines godliness as a real thing, as a supernatural thing, an extensive thing an intensive thing and a glorious thing. That being so, how do we see it? Twenty-four pictures follow. Take picture number 14. *A Godly Man is a Heavenly Man*. 'Heaven is in him before he is in heaven.' On this canvas Watson paints the godly man as heavenly in six ways, 1. In his election, 2. In his disposition, 3. In his communication, 4. In his actions, 5. In his expectation, and 6. In his conduct.

About three quarters of the book concern the pictures of the godly man and the last quarter is devoted to practical applications with a strong evangelistic appeal in two sections: Let men seriously weigh their misery while they remain in a state of ungodliness and, Consider how vain and contemptible other things are about which persons void of godliness busy themselves.

The last chapter is an exposition of union with Christ, 'My beloved is mine, and I am his' (Song 2:16). Altogether a spiritually uplifting and refreshing book.

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