

REFORMATION TODAY



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The photos below were taken at a service in Cuckfield, Sussex, 8th December 2006.



Family pictured above at Cuckfield Baptist Chapel. From the left, Nick, Phoebe, Jenny, Jasmine, Anna and Alistair, Nigel and Elizabeth Jones, Sally and David Gobbett. David is training for the ministry at Oakhill College. See article on hospitality for details.



At Cuckfield from the left, Elizabeth, Cecil Chen (a close friend of the family who organised the photos), Irene Allen, Richard Vickary, Danny Harding, Gwen Hanwell, Marian Harding and Peter Spink.



Sharon James between her parents the editor and Lyn Hulse. Michelle (née Hulse) and her husband Andrew Wishardt who spent most of the day with Marian the day before she 'crossed Jordan'. On the right is David Lovelock, pastor of Welbeck Road Evangelical Church, Newcastle (see article on hospitality)

Front cover picture – Bolney Village Chapel in West Sussex has twinned with Bureh Town Church in Sierra Leone (pastor Jacob Dove). The building shown urgently needs replacement and work is due to begin soon through help from Bolney Chapel (see article on twinning in RT 212).

Editorial

In this issue Andrew Wood explains how we can respond to the health and wealth movement. What is the Word of Faith Movement? This is a movement (not a denomination as such) whose proponents teach that divine health and prosperity are the right of every Christian who will exercise enough faith to receive them. The movement is referred to as the 'Prosperity Gospel', the 'Health and Wealth Gospel', and the 'Name It and Claim It'.

The flavour of the movement is illustrated by Fred Price who claims that Jesus was rich and that he left us with an example to follow. That is why Fred drives a Rolls Royce. He is following Jesus' example! Mr Price says, 'How can you glorify God in your body, when it doesn't function right? What makes you think the Holy Ghost wants to live inside of a body where he can't see out through the windows, and he can't hear out the ears?' Statements like this receive exuberant applause and approval from his congregation.

The prosperity gospel is spreading among churches large and small, denominational and independent, as well as through the ministries of televangelists such as Creflo Dollar, Joyce Meyer, Paul Crouch and Kenneth Copeland. These pastors, critics say, encourage their followers to 'sow a seed' of faith by spending money – often in the form of a donation to their ministries – in order to reap prosperity in the future. The proponents of these

teachings are growing fast as they monopolise the media with books and CDs, and market clothing and accessories.

The extent of this movement is seen in examples such as Kenneth and Gloria Copeland of Fort Worth, Texas. It is claimed that their television show, 'Believers' Voice of Victory', reaches at least 76 million households in the United States and airs on 135 international stations.

Paul and Jan Crouch are based in Costa Mesa, California. Their Trinity Broadcasting Network collects more than \$120 million a year from viewers of its Christian programming – more than any other TV ministry. Crouch calls his version of the prosperity gospel 'God's economy of giving'.

Creflo Dollar is the founder and president of Creflo Dollar Ministries and pastor of World Changers Church International in College Park, Georgia, which claims 25,000 members. According to the WCCI his television show, 'Changing Your World', reaches one billion people.

Benny Hinn is the leader of Benny Hinn Ministries in Grapevine, Texas. His 'This Is Your Day' program is seen throughout the United States and in nearly 200 foreign countries. His ministry took in \$60 million in 2001 and now exceeds \$90 million annually, according to the Colorado Springs Gazette.

T D Jakes leads 'T D Jakes Ministries' and 'The Potter's House', a church and ministry based in Dallas. His 'The Potter's House TV program' is seen throughout the world on TBN and Black Entertainment Television. His ministry boasts more than 26,000 members. In 2001, Time Magazine named him the best preacher in America.

Bishop Eddie Long is pastor of New Birth Missionary Baptist Church in suburban Atlanta. In August the Atlanta Journal-Constitution reported that Long received more than \$3 million in salary, benefits and perks – including the use of a \$350,000 Bentley – between 1997 and 2000 from a charity he founded. In response Long told the newspaper that 'Jesus wasn't poor'. Long's weekly ministry program on the Trinity Broadcasting Network, 'Taking Authority' is seen nationwide.

Joyce Meyer heads her Joyce Meyer's Ministries and was selected by *Time Magazine* as one of the 25 most influential evangelicals in America. Her program 'Enjoying Everyday Life' is carried on television and radio stations around the world.

Joel Osteen preaches that faith leads to health, prosperity and happiness. He is the author of the best-selling 'Your Best Life Now: 7 Steps to Living at Your Full Potential' (Warner Faith, 2004). He is based in Houston, where his Lakewood Church is ranked as the largest megachurch in the United States by *Church Growth Today*.

Matthew Ashimolowo, Senior Pastor of Kingsway International Christian Centre, in Hackney, East London is

leader of one of Britain's largest churches. In 2005 it was reported in *The Telegraph* that £120,000 was spent in celebrating his birthday, of which £80,000 was used to buy a Mercedes. The church attracts up to 10,000 mainly Afro-Caribbean worshippers a week to services. The centre claims to be the fastest-growing church in Europe, with a total membership of 12,000. Ashimolowo and his wife received £384,601 between October 1992 and September 2000, £338,334 of which was paid into one of his private companies, for 'pastoral services'. Mr Ashimolowo, his wife and two children were given free housing by the church, in addition to payments totalling £141,415 that came from the congregation. Mr Ashimolowo has been ordered to repay £200,000 back into the charity.

These men are spokesmen for the Christian faith to the public and represent the Lord Jesus to millions through their television programs. They are preaching a different Jesus, a different gospel, and communicate in a different spirit to that which is revealed to us in Holy Scripture. It is a massive and damaging distortion of the good news which is about repentance and holiness not wealth and health.

Brendon Naicker who wrote this editorial is a South African currently residing in the United Kingdom. He is the director of Lumière Ministries, a ministry assisting in equipping, educating and envisioning Christian leaders. He is a graduate of the Oral Roberts University and has completed a Master of Arts in Theology with the University of Wales. He is currently working on his PhD.

The Problem of Worldliness

Evaluations of what it is to be worldly vary considerably among evangelicals. I will survey the principal texts of Scripture, view the example of Moses, and conclude by an examination of how fundamentalists handle the subject of worldliness.

1. What the Scriptures teach

Dealing with the subject of immorality and separation from it Paul writes, 'I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people – not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy, and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world, but now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral, or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard, or a swindler. With such a person do not even eat' (1 Cor 5:9-11).

In a letter that has not survived Paul addressed the scandal of the incestuous man. In that context Paul shows zero tolerance. There must be a clear line of demarcation between the church and evil behaviour. The church cannot tolerate scandalous sin. The discipline of the incestuous man was essential. All the members at Corinth were required to shun the unrepentant member.

However Paul was careful to affirm that common sense must prevail. Shunning in this case was applied to a church member. It is no solution for Christians to escape the world altogether by living in ghettos or monasteries. The well-known saying, 'We are in the world but not of the world,' is derived from this passage of Scripture.

In 2 Corinthians Paul forbids alliances or partnerships with the world: 'Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols?

For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people."

"Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you." "I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty" (2 Cor 6:14-18).

Unequal partnerships of believers with unbelievers are addressed in the form of five rhetorical questions. These challenging questions highlight the incompatibility of spheres in which values and commitments are diametrically opposed. Where the structures of society espouse moral wickedness or religious darkness there lines of absolute separation must be drawn. Binge drinking among young people, which has become a plague in the UK, is an example. That is a no-go area. Gambling is another curse in society which must be avoided. Freemasonry with its false religious rites is incompatible with the gospel. Church membership should be barred to those who belong to Masonic orders or to secret societies.

2 Corinthians 6:14-18 makes it abundantly clear that for a believer to marry an unbeliever is unbiblical because interests are diametrically opposed.

It is of the utmost importance to observe how 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 concludes with a call to share the rights and privileges of adoption. 'I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.' Separation is not a negative exercise. It is positive. We turn our backs on one sphere to belong to another. The passage concludes not at the end of chapter six but with 2 Corinthians 7:1 which is a cogent call to perfect holiness out of reverence for God. Separation is from the world to a new world of holiness. It is positive. We have a new world to look forward to, a new world to prepare for. We anticipate the glory of the New Jerusalem. Without holiness no one will partake of that. The Christian life is packed with good works and enterprises. The lost world should never see sourness in Christians as though they are hard done by. Rather they should see joy that believers have eternal life and are active participants in God's eternal kingdom.

That separation from the world is positive and constructive can hardly be exaggerated. For instance the exodus of the Israelites out of Egypt is

treated in the whole Bible as the major biblical paradigm for holiness. 'Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation' (Ex 19:5,6). The Lord separated Israel from Egypt to make them a holy people. They were to become the vehicle for his truth in the world and a people from whom the Saviour of the world would eventually come (Deut 18:15).

It must be stressed that all separation from impurity to holiness must be based on grace. By grace we have been saved and having been saved we now live by grace and not by works. Our works are essential not in order to be justified but because we have been justified and now need to live consistently with that (Rom 6). Separation from the worldly life and values is never to vaunt our superiority over unbelievers. We hate pharisaism and must avoid it. At the same time the Scriptures warn that there will be persecution and mockery (Matt 5:11,12). All we do as Christians is never to earn favour with God. We do not have to earn anything since we are already in the family by adoption. Our status and privilege cannot increase. We must live holy and pure lives to be consistent with our calling into God's family.

So far we have examined the stark difference between believers and outright profligate sinners like drunkards or swindlers. A Christian can avoid scandalous people and yet be thoroughly worldly-minded. Therefore we must examine more Scripture to get to the heart of worldliness.

John's warning about worldliness is well known: 'Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him for everything in the world – the cravings of sinful man, the lusts of his eyes – and the boasting of what he has and does – comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.'

The word 'world' (*cosmos*) is used frequently in the New Testament in different ways. For instance, 'He was in the world and though the world was made by him, the world did not recognise him' (John 1:10). Here we have the world understood in terms of geography. The whole cosmos is created by God. However the world (people created by God) did not recognise the Saviour the Father sent. And it is these people who are lost that God loves as we read in John 3:16: 'For God so loved the world that

he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.’

Referring to the world of lost people John says, ‘The whole world is under the control of the evil one’ (1 John 5:19). We can define the lost world as mankind living in the kingdom of darkness and under the dominion of Satan. This sinful, rebellious, lost world is in opposition to Christ and his kingdom. The lost world expresses itself in independence from God and his Christ and lives for its own values. Jeremiah states the matter simply, ‘My people have committed two sins: they have forsaken me the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water’ (Jer 2:13). This sinful world is characterised by people who are determined to create their own pleasures and at the same time shut God out. In spite of this we are to love the lost people of this world and seek to bring them the good news of salvation in Christ. At the same time we are to be careful not to love the worldly values for which they live and which they serve.

Worldliness can be defined as ‘mankind living in the kingdom of darkness and under the dominion of Satan’. With that in mind we consider James who declares: ‘You adulterous people, don’t you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God’ (James 4:4). James implies that the world is adulterous and to become engrossed in that sphere is to become an enemy of God. Many of those who drive the modern media are besotted with adulterous ways and reflect the lost world. In the political realm if a politician steals another man’s wife he will get away with it but if he is found guilty of theft he will be compelled to resign. The world is pragmatic. God’s commandments ‘Do not murder’ and ‘Do not steal’ stand because worldly security is seriously undermined if these commandments are abandoned. Society will fall into a chaotic state like Iraq if murder is not reined in. But the adultery commandment is inconvenient in our world. It becomes a matter for frivolity and joking. Sadly at the same time everyone knows that great and deep personal pain and family damage follow infidelity. James is saying that if a professing believer accords with these adulterous values of the unbelieving world he denies the faith and is in fact an enemy of God.

John opens up this subject in his first letter. He declares that ‘the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes – and the boasting of what he has and

does – comes not from the Father but from the world’ (1 John 2:15-17). This is an accurate description of how the world operates. The cravings of sinful man is a reference to the pandering to physical appetites. Basically these appetites are not evil but when they get out of control they are sinful and ultimately disastrous. The most common examples today are drug addiction and alcoholism. Experimentation with drugs leads to addiction and addiction leads to early death. Alcoholism begins with extra drinks that are not necessary. This leads to addiction and when addiction takes control the end is the destruction of soul and body.

John speaks of the lust of the eyes. The world is characterised by the desire to see things for the sake of sinful pleasure. David Jackman in his commentary on 1 John hits the mark when he writes, ‘In our society with its increased technological capabilities this now reaches alarming proportions, as pornography begins to invade the homes and lives of many children.’ Pornography is available freely on the internet and pornography on TV channels is out of control.

When John speaks of ‘boasting of what he has and does’ this finds its expression especially in boasting about material possessions and wealth. The reference to ‘and what he does’ refers to boasting about worldly status and achievement. Attaining wealth and status is a major characteristic of Western society. When economic conditions improved in Spain in the 1960s and 1970s and freedom of religion replaced the stranglehold of the Roman Catholic Church many believers hoped that this would herald a revival of evangelical Christianity. However that did not happen. The vast majority in Spain fell in love with materialism and better standards of living rather than spiritual values. The same tragic outcome could happen in China when freedom eventually comes to that huge nation. The people there who have suffered poverty can easily fall in love with materialism and use their greater freedom to pursue wealth rather than Christ.

Jesus’ teaching on this theme is clear. ‘Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasure in heaven where moth and rust do not destroy and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.’ ‘No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money’ (Matt 6:24)

This subject of money and status reminds us of Moses who forsook both for the sake of God and his people.

2 The example of Moses

Moses stands out as one who resisted the attractions of the world. It is fairly argued that he was not typical on account of his prestigious position in Egypt. However all Christians have their own sphere in which to battle and the principles are the same.

J C Ryle in his book on holiness comments: 'The men of God who are named in the former part of chapter eleven of Hebrews, are all examples for us beyond question. But we cannot do what most of them did, however much we may drink into their spirit. We are not called upon to offer a literal sacrifice like Abel, or to build a literal ark like Noah, or to leave our country literally, and dwell in tents, and offer up our Isaac like Abraham. But the faith of Moses comes nearer to us. It seems to operate in a way more familiar to our own experience. It made him take up a line of conduct such as we must sometimes take up ourselves in the present day, each in our own walk of life, if we would be consistent Christians.'

The author of Hebrews was inspired to depict the experience of Moses in a way which highlights the crisis in Moses' life. The text runs like this:

'By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to be ill-treated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible. By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the firstborn of Israel.'

It is noteworthy that these attractions of Egypt were lawful. It would not be sinful if Moses like Joseph before him were to become prime minister or occupy a very high office in government. Riches in themselves need not be sinful. Abraham and Job were very rich. The pressure came for Moses inasmuch as he was called to ally himself with his own people suffering as slaves in Egypt. Even though we occupy humble circumstances compared

with Moses in Egypt we are called to ally ourselves with God's people. That is costly. It is even more costly when individuals are called into the ministry. For instance Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones aged 27 turned away from a wonderful career as a cardiologist, a career for which he had been well trained.

What was it that Moses gave up and refused?

Firstly Moses gave up rank and honour. He refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. It seems like ingratitude in Moses to turn away from Pharaoh's daughter. After all she had rescued him as an infant, adopted him and provided him with all the advantages of the best education in Egypt. Our sympathy is aroused for Pharaoh's daughter. However is it Moses' personal relationship with Pharaoh's daughter that is in view? I think not. Rather the text refers to Moses' reputation and to the extraordinary opportunities that belonged to him. Rank, prestige and power had come to him and were his by right to maintain and increase. In our British media we follow the careers of prime ministers and those who hold cabinet portfolios. If for instance the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced his resignation because he was going to study to enter the Christian ministry it would be sensational. Such a thing is unprecedented. It was a major move for Moses to leave the highest status and identify himself with a slave people.

Secondly Moses chose to turn his back on the pleasures of sin. Doubtless there were all kinds of pleasures which wealth could afford in Egypt. Many pleasures we think of today are lawful pleasures such as musical concerts or sporting events. The problem is that very soon they can become all-absorbing and idolatrous. For instance I know of an opera singer who has sung in most of the famous opera houses of the world. Eventually he turned his back on that career. He said it was impossible for him to live a disciplined Christian life and maintain an uncompromised Christian testimony in the world of opera. Some Christians may succeed but it is very difficult.

A high percentage of people live for pleasure. It is their religion. To enjoy themselves is for them the reason for living. If there is unlimited money there is no end to lawful pleasures such as ocean cruises and holidays abroad. But is that the way we are intended to live? Moses would have had the means to enjoy every kind of privilege and pleasure. But how can a

Christian live for holidays abroad and for ocean cruises and spend weeks of their lives at major sporting events like the Olympic Games when he or she belongs to a worldwide family of believers suffering persecution and often suffering poverty and the lack of basic needs in life? This is was the tension for Moses. All the pleasures available to him would become sinful if at the same time he ignored his own people and failed to make himself one with them.

Thirdly Moses gave up riches. The text says that Moses gave up the treasures of Egypt for the sake of Christ whom he esteemed of greater value. We know from the historical records that Egypt was fabulously wealthy. Much of this wealth came as a result of cheap slave labour as is seen in the example of the Hebrew slaves. Wealth is a very powerful attraction. One of the reasons for this is that wealth is a form of security. Political leaders often amass fortunes for themselves and store them away in Swiss banks for the time when they may be deposed. It is no small thing to turn away from wealth which provides security for the future. How is it possible to give up security for insecurity? That is a step of great magnitude. From having the security of great wealth Moses identified with his Israelite brothers who were slaves. That is momentous. It is like our Lord Jesus Christ who although he was rich, the whole universe belonging to him, nevertheless for our sake became poor (2 Cor 8:9).

Acts 7:22 tells us, ‘Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was powerful in speech and action. When Moses was forty years old, he decided to visit his fellow Israelites. He saw one of them being ill-treated by an Egyptian, so he went to his defence and avenged him by killing the Egyptian. Moses thought that his own people would realise that God was using him to rescue them, but they did not. The next day Moses came upon two Israelites who were fighting. He tried to reconcile them by saying, “Men, you are my brothers; why do want you to hurt each other?” But the man who was ill-treating the other pushed Moses aside and said, “Who made you ruler and judge over us? Do you want to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday?” When Moses heard this, he fled to Midian, where he settled as a foreigner and had two sons.’

This account derived from Exodus chapter two suggests that Moses brought about his own demise from power and prestige in Egypt through an impetuous action rather than a virtuous love for his people. However if we look carefully at the record we can see that Moses had indeed already

determined that he was going to try and rescue his fellow Israelites. He did not know how that could be achieved but he had decided in his heart that he would align himself with the Israelite slaves.

3. How fundamentalism solves the problem of worldliness

Fundamentalism as a movement became widespread within evangelicalism during the 1920s. This movement was largely a reaction against modernism. While the movement is not as strong as it used to be there are still many fundamentalist churches around the world. Some Reformed Baptist churches today adopt fundamentalist principles. I was converted in a fundamentalist Baptist church and so am familiar with the fundamentalist approach to worldliness. That approach is to name, shame and forbid specific practices. In my experience these were smoking, drinking alcohol, attending cinema, dancing and, for ladies, wearing make-up. These rules were not actually written in the church constitution and were not mandatory for church membership. But anyone involved in these worldly practices would hardly be passed for baptism and church membership. They were frowned on so that no self-respecting church member would indulge in these practices.

Each of the above needs evaluation. The easiest is smoking. The tide has turned to such a degree that even the world discourages smoking and forbids it to take place in designated areas. Drinking alcohol is not forbidden in Scripture and the wine of the communion table is real wine. The Scriptures forbid all excess. 'Wine is a mocker and beer a brawler' (Prov 20:1; see also 1 Peter 4:3 and Isaiah 5:11). A major problem arises when those battling with alcoholism enter church circles. When that occurs offence must be avoided at all costs. 'It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother to fall' (Rom 14:21). Total abstinence is appropriate under those circumstances. The question of attending cinema has been overtaken by TV. Movies are watched at home. Most Christian households have TV but strict control has to be exercised since there is so much which is vile. The text of Philippians 4:8 needs to be placed over every TV set. Some households ban TV and are probably better off for it since much time is saved for better pursuits. There are different kinds of dancing. Some is lascivious and on that account is out of bounds for believers. With regard to make-up Paul provides this principle to go by, 'I want women to dress modestly' (1Tim 2:9). This does not ban make-up. For us today the problem is immodest dress. How many pastors have the courage to address that problem?

The Bob Jones University in America is well known as fundamentalist. There are strict rules even about dress and short hair cuts for men. The line is not always easily drawn. For instance in gambling there is a difference between the evil of compulsive gambling and raffle tickets for charity. Also it would be difficult to make a ruling about the stock markets. Investment is not regarded as gambling but investment can become gambling in the high-risk sectors of the stock market. Fundamentalism has often made pre-millennialism mandatory. The precious unity of Bible-believing Christians is damaged when fundamentalists are ultra-separatist, proud and censorious.

While it is important to encourage a pure God-honouring way of life there is always a danger of legalism. Smaller issues are sometimes used in a derogatory and unwise way. For instance we cannot dismiss fellow believers because they differ with us on these issues. One can say a donkey does not smoke or wear-make up but that does not make a holy donkey! Another danger is Pharisaism. The Pharisees made up many rules about the Sabbath which were unwise and which made them judgmental of others. Another danger is to give the impression that Christianity is mostly about rules. That can invite satire like the verse:

*There are three things I must not do -
I must not gamble, smoke or chew,
There's one thing more I must not do -
I must not stand in a cinema queue.*

When abstinence is associated with dedication, namely, the idea that I avoid worldly activities because I am totally devoted to the cause of Christ, that is advantageous. When I was converted through the lives of evangelical students at university it was their joyful dedication and holiness of life that was compellingly attractive to me. I was impressed by their outright, unashamed confession of Christ and by the fact that the believers were separate from the world. There is often more zeal for evangelism and more dedication to serve among those of fundamentalist persuasion than those who are indifferent about worldliness and who seem to be afraid to be out of step with worldly behaviour.

Every generation will have its own judgments of what constitutes worldly behaviour. We must take the principles in Scripture and evaluate what is inappropriate for us as believers. In everything courage must be combined with humility. We are sinners saved by grace.

The Health and Wealth Movement

Andrew Wood, Batley Evangelical Church.

‘Live long and prosper’ – does God want us to be rich and healthy?

‘Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in health just as your soul prospers’ (3 John 2 NASB).

Professor Gordon D Fee describes the opening words to John’s third epistle as ‘the basic Scripture text’ for what is variously called the ‘Word of Faith’, ‘Health and Wealth’, ‘Positive Confession’ or ‘Prosperity Gospel’ movement; for example Paul Scanlon, commenting on this passage, states, ‘John.... makes clear that God wants us to prosper in life – but only as our soul prospers. All external prosperity must be rooted in a strong, healthy and prosperous soul.’

There are a number of problems with Scanlon’s interpretation of John’s words. First of all, the greeting employed by John is not unusual, nor particularly Christian. Lots of people in John’s day began their letters with a ‘health-wish’. Arguably Scanlon asks too much of such a conventional and commonplace greeting. Secondly, it is evident from the remainder of the epistle that John is not preoccupied with Gaius’ health or prosperity but rather with his character – he commends him for his faithfulness to the truth (vv3-4), he encourages him to continue to show hospitality to fellow believers (vv 5-7) and tells him of the need to endeavour to do good in the face of evil (vv9-11). He does not, however, go on to ‘make clear’ that God wants him ‘to prosper in life’; his opening greeting is simply that, an opening greeting. Finally, John makes no causal link between ‘soul prosperity’ and ‘life prosperity’. John does not promise that ‘soul prosperity’ will lead to ‘life prosperity’, nor does he promise that Gaius’ prospering soul will secure for him good health and a prosperous life.

As Fee points out, ‘We may rightly learn from this text to pray for our brothers and sisters that “all will go well with them”’; but to argue from the text that God wills our... prosperity is to abuse the text.’

Faith as a force

Fundamental to the beliefs of the ‘Prosperity Gospel’ movement, of which Scanlon’s teaching is so typical, is its understanding of ‘faith as a force’.

Success, health and prosperity are deemed to be the express will of God for every believer. However, one does not receive success, health and prosperity automatically; rather they have to be 'claimed'. Only those who act in faith, who pray in faith, will prosper, or attract God's blessing. Pastor Casey Treat, one of the main speakers at the 'Stronger' Conference at Abundant Life in 2006, has said that 'if you don't have the right attitude...you can't live a prosperous lifestyle...first of all you have to believe, receive and embrace the principles of prosperity for you'. To do so is to embrace success. Teaching in the 'Prosperity Gospel' movement, therefore, concentrates on how one can succeed. Pastors have to model the teaching they proclaim and the churches they lead have to be seen to be 'prospering'.

Wealth – purchased at the cross

'For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich' (2 Cor 8:9, NIV)

According to Kenneth Hagin, an extremely influential proponent of the 'Prosperity Gospel', God 'wants His children to eat the best, He wants them to wear the best clothing, He wants them to drive the best cars, and He wants them to have the best of everything'. Hagin believes that at the cross the Lord Jesus Christ wrested all earthly wealth from the hands of Satan, recovering what had originally been lost by Adam at the fall. On the cross, according to Hagin, Christ suffered the curse of material poverty that we might become materially rich.

Hagin claimed, '...The Lord spoke to me and said, 'Don't pray for money any more. You have authority through my name to claim prosperity.... After [Adam] sold out to Satan, the second Adam, Jesus Christ, came to redeem you.... [now] all you need do is to say, "Satan, take your hands off my money."' '

However Paul, in 2 Corinthians 8:9, is not suggesting that the Lord Jesus' death on the cross secured material prosperity for his followers. Arguably Paul is not speaking about the cross at all here, but about the Lord's incarnation (what Stott refers to as his 'voluntary self-impoverishment', his 'renouncing of the wealth of heaven'). When Christ took flesh he did so with great humility and at great cost. The Lord became poor (i.e. 'took flesh' – John 1:14, Phil 2:6-7) that we might become rich (i.e. that we might be glorified with Christ and inherit the kingdom – Romans 8:17-18). As Kruse rightly points out:

‘Just as Jesus’ poverty is not to be understood in terms of abject want in his incarnate life, so too the riches which he came to make available to believers are not to be understood in terms of material prosperity. It is salvation itself, and the blessings of the new age involved in it, that constitute the riches which Christ by his poverty enables believers to enjoy.’

Believers in Jerusalem were in desperate need. There had been widespread famine. Paul encourages the Christians in Corinth to give towards a collection that he himself is making on behalf of their impoverished brothers and sisters in Christ. The self-giving example of the Lord Jesus in his incarnation should, according to Paul, be sufficient to stir them to give.

Ironically, the motive for giving in the ‘Prosperity Gospel’ movement is not the self-giving example of the Lord Jesus Christ in his incarnation, but the belief that those who give will receive a reward for doing so, a reward that exceeds the amount given.

‘Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows’
(Gal 6:7, NIV)

Galatians 6:7 is seen as a scriptural law, a law to which God is bound. As a believer gives, so God has committed himself to give back, but not in equal measure; rather God will reward the giver with a hundredfold (Mark 10:29-30), with a measure that is ‘pressed down, shaken together and running over’ (Luke 6:38). Therefore Gloria Copeland, on the basis of this scriptural law, encourages believers to ‘give \$10 and receive \$1000; give \$1000 and receive \$10,000...give one house and receive 100 houses or a house worth 100 times as much’.

If one reads Galatians 6:8 in its context, however, it is immediately obvious that Paul is not speaking about material things at all, but about spiritual things. One can sow to one’s own flesh (Gal 6:8, i.e. one can gratify ‘the desires of the sinful nature’ Gal 5:16, 19-21); or one can sow to the Spirit (Gal 6:8, i.e. one can live by/walk by the Spirit and can satisfy the longings of the Spirit [Gal 5:16, 22]). The presence and work of the Holy Spirit within a believer causes him/or her to wage war with the old sinful nature and to ‘sow to the Spirit’, reaping the ‘fruit of the Spirit’. According to Paul the outcome of sowing to the flesh will be ‘destruction’, whereas the outcome of sowing to the Spirit will be ‘eternal life’ (Gal 6:8). Such an interpretation is entirely consistent with the theology of Paul’s letter to the Galatians as a whole. Luke 6:38 is evidently about forgiveness and not material prosperity (read Luke 6:37-38).

In Mark 10:29-30 the Lord identifies the motive for ‘giving up’ various things as being for his sake and the gospel not earthly wealth (v. 29).

The ‘Prosperity Gospel’ movement is in danger of encouraging people to give in order that they might receive, to give, therefore, for the wrong motive (see Romans 1:18-32, Ephesians 5:3-7 and Colossians 3:5-9 where Paul condemns greed). Furthermore, by suggesting that ‘giving and receiving’ is a scriptural law to which even God is bound, the movement seriously undermines the biblical doctrine of the sovereignty of God.

Healing – purchased at the cross

‘Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; The punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed’

Isaiah 53:4-5 (NIV)

On the basis of this text, advocates of the ‘Prosperity Gospel’/ ‘Health and Wealth Movement’ believe that God has promised both forgiveness and healing to those who trust in Christ. At the cross Christ suffered that we might be set free from the power of sin and from the effects of illness. Kenneth Copeland has said, ‘It does not satisfy God to see sickness and disease on believers today. He was satisfied when that sickness and disease was laid on Jesus. [For God] ... to put sickness on you after it was put on Jesus would be a miscarriage of justice!’ Leon Fontaine, Pastor of Springs Church in the States and speaker at the Abundant Life Church ‘Stronger’ Conference later this year, has taught on ‘how to minister healing and be healed’ and how to ‘believe for healing in your own life...or minister it to someone else’; audio resources for sale on the Springs Church website by Pastor Cam Fontaine claim to teach believers how ‘to set in motion the principles of God’s word for walking in divine health’.

Does Isaiah have physical infirmities and physical wounds in mind in Isaiah 53:4-5? Words relating to sickness and healing are sometimes used in the Old Testament as a way of referring to sinfulness and forgiveness (see Psalm 103:1-3, Isaiah 1:4-6, Isaiah 57:14-19, Jeremiah 30:12-15, Hosea 4:4 and Hosea 11:1-4 for example). Peter, in his first epistle certainly understands Isaiah’s use of ‘infirmities’ and ‘healing’ in this metaphorical way when he writes: ‘He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die

to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed' (1 Peter 2:24). Whilst it is true that Matthew sees these words of Isaiah as having been fulfilled in the healing ministry of the Lord Jesus, they are fulfilled in his earthly ministry as Messiah and not linked to his work of redemption from sin on the cross. In Matthew, as France notes, we have a 'non-redemptive application of a "Servant passage" ' from the book of the prophet Isaiah. Although Jesus 'now heals in fulfilment of prophecy... He does not thereby accomplish his mission...for His fate is that of the Servant: the bearing of sin through the suffering of death'.

Responses

How should we respond to the claims of this movement?

Vincent McCann of the Reachout Trust wrote, 'In the final analysis it can be said that although there are probably many genuine believers within the movement who are sincerely trying to live a life of commitment to God, they have sadly, like the Galatian Christians in the early Church, been misled into believing "another gospel" (Gal 1:6-9). It is therefore the responsibility of informed Christians to lovingly, and clearly, point out the errors of this movement in the hope that those who have been deceived by it will be restored to '...the faith that once for all delivered to the saints' (Jude 3).

Similarly in addressing the question of unity and truth among evangelicals, the Evangelical Alliance states, 'Although evangelicalism has usually been highly suspicious of the arguments of the Word of Faith teachers, we take the view that there is enough common ground to justify a more constructive and ecumenical critique of the movement – that it is worth trying to disentangle the delicate wisteria of truth from the rampant Russian ivy of error...The Word of Faith movement should be recognised *at its best* as a serious attempt to explore and be blessed by the generosity and faithfulness of God.'

In a paper produced by the Assemblies of God, we read, 'In considering any doctrine it is always necessary to ask whether it is in harmony with the total teaching of Scripture. Doctrine based on less than a holistic view of biblical truth can only do harm to the cause of Christ. It can often be more detrimental than views which reject Scripture altogether. Some people will more likely accept something as truth if it is referred to in the Word of God, even if the teaching is an extreme emphasis or contradicts other principles of Scripture. God's Word does teach great truths such as healing, provision for need, faith, and the authority of believers. The Bible does teach that a disciplined mind is

an important factor in victorious living. But these truths must always be considered in the framework of the total teaching of Scripture. The fact that doctrinal aberrations develop...is not a reason for rejecting or remaining silent concerning them. The existence of differences of opinion is all the more reason why believers should continue diligently to search the Scriptures. It is why servants of God must faithfully declare the whole counsel of God.

Donald Sider, author of 'Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger' is much more critical of the movement and says, 'It's a half-truth...and half-truths are heresy. It's seriously, fundamentally misleading Christians today.'

Conclusion

The beliefs of the 'Prosperity Gospel' movement outlined above are clearly based upon poor biblical exegesis: texts are taken out of context, misappropriated and poorly interpreted. It is not surprising therefore, as the ACUTE report says, that 'if the rules by which a movement interprets Scripture are seriously flawed, it is inevitable that the belief system which that movement constructs for itself will also be flawed'. As a consequence of applying a flawed hermeneutic to Scripture the 'Prosperity Gospel' movement has completely rewritten the traditional biblical meta-narrative, advocating new and questionable approaches to the doctrines of creation, the fall, covenant, the divinity of Christ, the incarnation, the death of Christ, the resurrection of Christ, the atonement, salvation, faith, the sovereignty of God, the end times and the second coming of Christ.

The Abundant Life Church in Bradford is inextricably linked with the 'Prosperity Gospel' movement, both theologically and through its fellowship with churches and teachers that propagate its teachings around the world.

What should our response be as pastors and teachers? Surely, as the 'responses' cited above indicate, we should try to engage in dialogue with the leaders of the movement locally; we should be prepared to critique their teaching and criticise their excesses; we should warn members of our own congregations regarding the errors and half-truths that are associated with the movement; and we should endeavour to faithfully teach the whole counsel of God, not neglecting the difficult subjects of healing and suffering, wealth and poverty, and success and failure.

(This article in its original form had copious valuable footnotes attached. The full article is available from the author at andy@aalgd.freeseerve.co.uk)

The Works of Abraham Booth (1734-1806)

In the last issue, Sharon James wrote a short biography of Abraham Booth and commented on his personality. In this article she describes some of the movements he was involved with and provides an overview of his major works.

1. The movements he was involved in

i. The Baptist Missionary Society

The Particular Baptist Society for propagating the gospel among the heathen was formed in October 1792. In January 1793 the committee agreed to support John Thomas as a missionary to India, and William Carey volunteered to accompany him. Booth was the one who had linked John Thomas with the young society. When a group of Particular Baptist ministers in London met to consider setting up a support group for the mission, the chairman of the meeting, Dr Samuel Stennett, advised them to 'stand aloof and not commit themselves'. Booth ignored Stennett's advice. He was one of the first to help out with funds when the unexpected addition of Dorothy Carey plus sister plus baby to the outgoing mission party suddenly necessitated a large sum of money. On May 10 1799 Booth preached at a farewell service at Little Prescott Street for the missionaries going out to join Carey.¹ Booth was a faithful and supportive correspondent to

Carey and Fuller. In supporting the mission, it seems that Booth had to face the less than enthusiastic attitude of his leading deacons.

ii. The Particular Baptist Fund; The Education Society

Abraham Booth took a lead in supporting the Particular Baptist Fund. He had many wealthy people in his congregation and they gave generously. One member alone, William Taylor, donated over £18,000 to the fund in the form of anonymous gifts passed on through Booth.

In 1804, shortly before his death, Booth took the initiative to get the London Baptist Education Society off the ground again. He felt that his own ministry had been hampered by his lack of education, and he wanted others to have the opportunities he had lacked. When the Baptist College opened at Stepney in 1810, it was acknowledged that it was the realisation of Booth's hopes.

iii. The Sunday School Society

Abraham Booth remembered his own disadvantaged background, and had a passion to help untaught children. Hence his encouragement of his deacon William Fox (1736-1826), who founded the Sunday School Society in 1785. This society aimed to encourage all denominations to start Sunday Schools. The ultimate

aim was the provision of universal free elementary education. An active Sunday School was started at Prescott Street during Booth's pastorate.

iv. *Itinerant preaching*

Booth had been brought to Christ through the sacrificial efforts of itinerant preachers visiting his small Nottinghamshire village. He never forgot that. He took the initiative in 1797 to form the London Baptist Society for the Encouragement and Support of Itinerant and Village Preaching. This was later named the Home Mission Society.

v. *The Anti-Slavery movement*

In 1792 a number of petitions were presented to Parliament calling for the abolition of the slave trade. Booth was passionate about this campaign, and canvassed support among his church and friends. His sermon on the subject, preached on 29th January 1792 was so powerful that, by demand, it was published and widely circulated. Entitled: *Commerce in the Human Species and the Enslaving of Innocent Persons inimical to the Laws of Moses and the Gospel of Christ*,² it argued for the natural rights of 'oppressed Africans'. If British people could kidnap and sell Africans, why not admit that Africans should be permitted to come and kidnap and sell British people? Any commerce in humans is evil. Booth concluded by challenging his congregation to pray and work for the abolition of slavery. He died the year before the abolition of the slave trade

was secured in 1807.³ But in Clarkson's account of the abolition movement he listed Booth as one of those who by their writing and influence pushed forward the cause.

2. His works

i. *The Reign of Grace (1768)*

This was Booth's first book (327 pp), written in moments snatched between weaving stockings and teaching village boys. Yet it was tremendously successful. By 1800 it had been reprinted nine times in England, once in Scotland, and three times in America. It has always been in print; Evangelical Press recently published a lightly modernised edition (2003). Booth's starting point was Romans 5:21: 'Just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness, to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.'

It is a strong defence of Calvinism, explaining the sovereign grace of God in election, effectual calling, pardon, justification, adoption, sanctification and perseverance. It is also a polemic against the hyper-calvinist teaching that you cannot offer the gospel to sinners; that sinners need a 'warrant' for their faith: 'The blessings of grace were never designed to distinguish the worthy or to reward merit, but to relieve the wretched and save the desperate.'

The only encouragement a sinner has to apply to Christ for all that he

wants, consists not in a consciousness of being possessed of any pious disposition . . . but in that grace which reigns, and is proclaimed in the gospel. Yes; the free declarations of the gospel concerning Jesus, contain a sufficient warrant for the vilest sinner, in the most desperate circumstances, to look for relief at the hand of Christ. Such as, *I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. Look unto me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth. Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out. Whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.*

As against those who overstate grace to the extent of not bothering about practical holiness, Booth is adamant about the vital importance of sanctification.

ii. *Death of Legal Hope in the Life of Evangelical Obedience (1770)*

Shorter than *The Reign of Grace* (102 pp) this was a series of sermons preached during Booth's first year at Little Prescot Street. Again the motivation was practical. Calvinist doctrine could lead so quickly to careless living: 'Well, God has elected me, saved me, justified me, and he's going to keep me! So don't get legalistic with me and tell me what to do!'

In response Booth opens up the text: 'For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for Christ' (Gal 2:19). Keeping the law is not the means by which someone is saved. But after being saved, they are to keep the law as a rule of conduct, for the glory of God. He quotes Jonathan Edwards: 'The glory of God is the ultimate end of our existence itself, and of all we enjoy.'

The tone is pastoral and practical, as in this challenge to readers: 'What is the tenor of your conduct? To what, or to whom do you live? Is it the immensely glorious God? Or is it yourself and the world? On what have you placed your affections? To whom have you devoted your heart? Remember who it is that makes the tender and righteous demand: 'My son, give me thy heart.'

iii. *Treatise on the Deity of Christ (ed. 1777)*

The rationalism of the eighteenth century led to the increase of anti-Trinitarian teaching. A French Huguenot, Jacques Abbadie (c. 1654-1727) had written *A Treatise on the Deity of Christ* in 1689. Booth was dissatisfied with the quality of an earlier English translation. He improved and edited the work, and republished it in 1777. This new edition was found useful by orthodox ministers in both the Established Church, and dissenting churches.

iv. *An Apology for the Baptists in which they are vindicated from the imputation of laying an unwarrantable stress on the*

ordinance of baptism; and against the charge of bigotry in refusing communion at the Lord's Table to Paedobaptists (1778)

The question of who should be admitted to take the Lord's Supper was fiercely contested among the Particular Baptists. John Bunyan (1628-1688) had argued for an 'open table', asking, 'how can you deny the Lord's Supper to anyone who truly loves the Lord?' Hugh and Caleb Evans, successive presidents of the Bristol Academy had similarly argued for an open table. The majority of Particular Baptists however had maintained that baptism precedes taking communion; and that the only true baptism is believers' baptism by immersion, the 'closed table' principle.

The evangelical awakening had the effect of loosening denominational barriers. As gospel preachers increasingly visited each others' churches, it seemed more and more incongruous for a Baptist church to invite a paedobaptist preacher to preach, only to bar him from the Lord's Table.

In 1772 the *Candidus/Pacificus Tract* appeared: *A Modest Plea for Free Communion at the Lord's Table*.⁴ The most thorough response came from Booth, in the form of the *Apology* (176 pp). He was on good terms with a number of paedobaptists. But he maintained that when you open the table to paedobaptists, you are taking to yourself the right to set aside one of the commands of Christ. 'God

never gave power to any man to change his ordinances, or to dispense with them. God is a jealous God and careful of his sovereignty.' 'Now for us to admit unbaptized persons to the Lord's Table, would be to lay entirely aside and annul the ordinance. To dispense with a divine institution, for the edification of weak believers, and invert the order of God's appointments and break his positive laws with a view to his glory would seem to border on that hateful maxim, "Let us do evil that good may come."'

Booth feared that if Baptists opened the table, they would be the only branch of the church which effectively said that you did not need to be baptised before taking communion.

Of course, he wrote, we should love all those who truly love the Lord. And yes, we should express that love in every way possible 'that is not inconsistent with a revelation of the divine will in some other respect'. Booth argued in favour of inviting paedobaptist ministers to preach: 'To admit, therefore, a minister among us, with whom we should have no objection to commune, could we allow the validity of infant baptism; as it is a token of our affection for a servant of Christ, of our love to the truth he preaches, and is not contrary to any part of divine revelation, must be lawful.' But, to accept paedobaptists at the Lord's Table, is to be hypocritical, effectively accepting 'as a fact what we verily believe is a falsehood' (ie infant sprinkling).

Booth, while happy with certain qualifications to accept the name 'Strict Baptist' did not see this issue as one which should divide him from his fellow Baptists. He was happy to work in fellowship with open communion Particular Baptists.

Booth's arguments were comprehensive, and won the day as far as most Particular Baptists were concerned. There was something of an interlude in the debate until Robert Hall published the plea for Open Communion, *Terms of Communion*, in 1815.

During the nineteenth century it was the open communion arguments that won ground. But neither side could claim a clear-cut victory. Closed communion pastors had to refuse the table to genuine believers. That seemed clearly out of keeping with New Testament practice. Open communion pastors had to receive at the table those they believed to be unbaptized. That seemed equally unbiblical. Over subsequent years the numbers of Baptist churches adopting an open table massively outnumbered those who kept a closed table (in effect the Strict Baptists). But although Booth's arguments in the *Apology* may not have won the day in terms of numbers of churches adopting a closed table, these arguments still have considerable force. In pastoral work with young Christians, many of them converted in para-church university settings, when baptism is mentioned one so often hears the response: 'I know it's

biblical, but it's not necessary for salvation.' The sub-text seems to be 'I'm not going to go through with the hassle.' Booth would, no doubt, come back with the words of his *Apology*: 'When God speaks we should be all attention, and when he commands we should be all submission.' Or again, quoting Ryland: 'Baptism ought to be considered as glorious an act of worship as ever was instituted by God. It is to be performed but once in the life of a Christian, but once to eternity; and therefore it ought to be done with the utmost veneration and love.'

The central concern of this work is who should take the Lord's Supper, rather than a treatment of its significance; but it should be noted that Booth maintained a memorialist, non-sacramental view of the Supper.

v. *Paedobaptism Examined*
1784/1787

This consists of a massive two volume work (443 pages and 342 pages); a further volume: *A Defence of Paedobaptism Examined or Animadversions on Dr Edward Williams's Antipaedobaptism Examined* (474 pages) and *A Reply to Mr Peter Edwards* (91 pages). I think that possibly this is the book he most enjoyed writing. With transparent relish he puts forward all the possible arguments for believers' baptism by immersion, and backs them up with a dizzying array of quotations from *paedobaptist* authors. It is rather like a magnificent firework display. He so obviously really enjoyed collating the

hundreds of quotations. And this massive collection of citations is not as boring as may be imagined: there are flashes of dry humour, especially in the volume *Antipaedobaptism Examined* where he had great fun quoting some of the more outrageous things said against himself.

Booth clearly enjoyed quoting some of the more ridiculous arguments against the Baptists, especially from Richard Baxter and Matthew Henry. One of Richard Baxter's intemperate attacks is worth quoting:

. . . the ordinary practice of baptizing over head in cold water is no ordinance of God, but an heinous sin . . . the magistrate *ought to restrain it*, to save the lives of his subjects. . . .That it is *flat murder* . . . is undeniable to any understanding man.... covetous physicians, methinks, should [encourage it] . . . Catarrhs and obstructions, which are the two great fountains of most mortal diseases in man's body, could scarce have a more notable means to produce them where they are not, or to increase them where they are. Apoplexies, lethargies, palsies, and all comatous diseases, would be promoted by it. So would... debility of the stomach, crudities, and almost all fevers, dysenteries, diarrhoeas, colics... convulsions, spasms, tremors, and so on... it is good for nothing but to despatch men out of the world that are burdensome... I conclude, if murder be a sin, then dipping in

cold water over head, in England, is a sin.

Booth comments: 'Poor man! He seems to be afflicted with a violent hydrophobia! For he cannot think of anyone being immersed in cold water but he starts, he is convulsed, he is ready to die with fear. . . What a pity it is that the celebrated *History of Cold Bathing* by Sir John Floyer were not published half a century earlier. (Floyer was a celebrated doctor, whose advocacy of cold bathing was enormously influential).'

Booth's summary of the first two volumes runs as follows (lightly edited):

Paedobaptist authors therefore have been cited as admitting that baptism is a positive institution, and that positive rites depend entirely on the revealed will of God, with regard to how they should be performed. They admit that the obvious sense of the term baptism is immersion. They accept that the principal thing intended by the ordinance is a representation of communion with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection. They admit that immersion was the apostolic practice, and that, except in extraordinary cases, it was the general custom for thirteen hundred years. They admit that immersion is the present practice of the Greek and Oriental churches, and that those churches include one half of the Christian

world. Paedobaptists admit that plunging is more expressive of the great things intended by the ordinance than pouring or sprinkling. They agree that the first instance of pouring or sprinkling, instead of immersion which is expressly recorded, was about the middle of the third century and then condemned. They agree that the apostate church of Rome brought pouring into common practice. They will, generally admit that immersion is not prejudicial to health.⁵ They agree with Baptists that no power on earth has authority to alter the law of Christ or to depart from apostolic example when they dispute with the Papists concerning the sacred supper. They accept that there is no express command or plain example in the New Testament relating to infant baptism. They admit that there is no evidence of Paedobaptism's being practised before the conclusion of the second or the beginning of the third century. They agree that we should treat with contempt the plea of pretended apostolic tradition, unsupported by scripture (except in the cases of Paedobaptism and Episcopacy). They admit that infant baptism and infant communion were introduced about the same time; that they are supported by kindred arguments; that they were equally common for a course of ages; and that they are still united in the practice of half the Christian world.⁶

Booth also goes through each Scripture text commonly used for the paedobaptist cause, and quotes numerous paedobaptist writers who show that these texts should not be used for that purpose.

In terms of the effect of this work, it has been maintained that it was reading Booth on baptism that led to Adoniram Judson's becoming a Baptist. Judson, one of the first American overseas missionaries, was sent to India in 1812 by the Congregationalists. During the long sea voyage he resolved to study the issue of baptism. A study of the Greek New Testament, plus other works, including Booth, led to a conviction that the New Testament taught believers' baptism by immersion. His wife Ann, initially horrified at the thought of joining the despised Baptists, studied the matter for herself and reached the same conclusion. When Adoniram and Ann were baptised in Carey's church in Calcutta, they had to resign from their sending body, with no certainty of any future support. The rest is history. The Judsons became the first missionaries supported by the American Baptists. Their dramatic story provided a massive impetus to the new mission movement. The American Baptists have since become the largest ever missionary sending body. The legacy of the Judsons also lives on in Burma (Myanmar). The Baptist Convention has nearly two million adherents, and has itself become an effective missionary sending body.

Booth's final two published works seem at first sight to be a positive affirmation of biblical truth:

vi. *Glad Tidings to Perishing Sinners* (1796)

This reads as a passionate defence of the free offer of the gospel: 'The genuine Gospel is a complete warrant for the most ungodly person to believe in Jesus.'

vii. *Divine Justice Essential to Divine Nature* (1803)

This reads as a positive (if rather rambling) defence of substitutionary atonement. In fact these two works both reflected an underlying controversy with Booth's friend and colleague Andrew Fuller.

Andrew Fuller was a great admirer of several North American theologians, including Samuel Hopkins. Abraham Booth was enormously suspicious of Hopkins, as he had moved towards the governmental view of the atonement. Booth regarded this as a dangerous dilution of substitutionary atonement.

Andrew Fuller tried to downplay the disagreements between them, observing that Booth was becoming somewhat paranoid and peevish in old age, which may have led to unnecessary misunderstanding and suspicion between them.⁷

Booth was right to discern that Andrew Fuller was shifting position vis-à-vis the atonement. The sadness is that this was happening right at the

end of Booth's life when he had neither the energy or health to really engage with the issue with the clarity he would have brought to it fifteen years earlier. In 1804 he wrote to his brother William, apologising that he had not written before to congratulate him on his marriage. He says that his health has been so bad that writing has been a struggle, and whenever he could hold a pen he was busy getting 'an uncommonly long sermon' ready for the press (ie, *Divine Justice*).⁸ He goes on to say that he does not expect to live another winter.

Dr Oliver's recently published *The English Calvinistic Baptists*⁹ includes a detailed discussion of these two works and the nature of the disagreements between Fuller and Booth.

Abraham Booth's significance

Booth's ministry encapsulated all the positive elements of particular Baptist history at that time: strong commitment to orthodox doctrine and a determination not to underplay biblical church order alongside an equal passion for mission and evangelism, and openness to new forms of outreach. Some of his work dealt with controversial issues, such as admittance to the Lord's Supper. But the motivation for all of his ministry was a desire to see people come to Christ. As a young convert he had willingly walked for miles to preach in the villages of Nottinghamshire. As a mature minister he did not lose that passion. In *The Reign of Grace* he held out this gospel offer. It would be the theme of

his preaching for the next thirty-eight years: 'Be your sins like a debt of millions of talents; be they more in number than the stars in the firmament, and heavier than the sand of the sea; yet full forgiveness superabounds. Let this be your rest and this your joy, that grace reigns in the pardon of all sin.'

This two-part article on Booth has been taken from a lecture given at Regent's Park College, 2nd July, 2006, on a day to mark the 200th anniversary of the death of Abraham Booth. The other lectures were on 'Abraham Booth, the Pastor' (in which Dr Kenneth Dix drew on his extensive knowledge of the church records of Little Prescot Street), and 'The Piety of Abraham Booth' (in which Dr Michael Haykin dealt especially with his personal prayer life). All three lectures will be published in a forthcoming book on Abraham Booth to be edited by Michael Haykin and published by the Particular Baptist Press. Footnotes have been kept to a minimum in these articles; full documentation will be found in that volume. The Particular Baptist Press is in the process of reprinting the complete works of Abraham Booth.

² Reprinted in *The Works of Abraham Booth*, vol. 1, Particular Baptist Press, 2006. pp. 97-121.

³ Emancipation of the remaining slaves was secured in 1833.

⁴ In his recent book *A History of the English Calvinistic Baptists 1771-1892*, Banner of Truth, 2006, Dr Robert Oliver argues that what came out as two tracts were actually one work, a collaboration between John Collet Ryland and Daniel Turner. The arguments are clearly summarised. Oliver also describes the very aggressive response from William Buttfield who lost no chances to berate his open table brothers.

⁵ Unless they are Richard Baxter!

⁶ Abraham Booth. *Paedobaptism Examined, with Replies to the Arguments and Objections of Dr Williams and Mr Peter Edwards in Three Volumes. Ebenezer Palmer. London. 1829.* Volume 2, pp. 289-290.

⁷ Dr Haykin discusses the increasing use of governmental terms to describe the atonement among the Sutcliff/Ryland/Fuller group, but argues that they *also* maintained a substitutionary view. For example, Fuller in 1802 maintained: 'We believe that Christ, in laying down his life for us, actually died as our substitute, ensured the curse of the Divine Law, that we might escape it, Haykin, *One Heart*, p. 302.

⁸ Letter 1/3/(b), from Abraham Booth to brother William at Annesley, Woodhouse. The letter is a copy, and the date has been mis-copied; it is given as 19th June 1824, but is most likely 19th June 1804. The Booth collection, the Angus Library, Regent's Park College, Oxford.

⁹ see footnote 4 above.

¹ The missionaries were: William Ward (printer); Miss Tidd (engaged to marry John Fountain); Mr and Mrs Daniel Brunson; Mr and Mrs William Grant (with two children); and Mr and Mrs Joshua and Hannah Marshman (with three children). The sermon is reprinted in *The Works of Abraham Booth, Volume 1*, Particular Baptist Press, 2006. pp. 153-163.

Manipulating the gods

Tom Wells

Some years ago there was a man on TV from the west coast of the United States who would say, 'The secret of God's blessing you is to send me money!' It was, of course, an outrageous idea. Nevertheless I always admired his candour. In America we've been 'blessed' with a large number of such preachers, but most of them hid what they were doing under a barrage of pious words. But not this fellow. He came right out with it! 'If you want to force God to bless you, just send money to me!'

I thought of this man this morning as I was out for a walk. I passed two women whom I had seen yesterday. Then I had said to them, 'The Lord has given us a wonderful day. We must thank him.' They agreed, and I walked on. Today was another lovely day. I saw them again and I reminded them of what I had said before. One of them responded, 'Yes, we must be saying the right things.' She may simply have been joking, but her words may have meant, 'If we say the right things in the right way, we can get the weather and other things that we want from God.'

Are there people who think this way? I fear the answer is we all think this way more often than we would like to admit. Of course if we realize what we've done, we will repent of trying to force our will on God. Instead we will admire his wisdom in giving some things and withholding others.

I have had to think about this question recently since I am preaching through the book of James. Can we affect God and even Satan by what we do? It surely looks that way in the words, 'Come near to God

and he will come near to you' (4:8), and in the previous words, 'Resist the devil, and he will flee from you' (4:7). Of course we're interested in God here, not Satan. In saying that we can affect God, we're verging on some deep theological waters. I don't intend to enter those. Instead I will simply remind you that God makes promises. Those promises are of two kinds. Some are absolute, but others are conditional. An example would be, 'Ask and it will be given to you' (Mt 7:7). We may compare that with James's rebuke, 'You do not have, because you do not ask God' (James 4:2).

It should be clear, of course, that we are not manipulating God or forcing him to do anything when we act on his promises. His promises are about things he is quite ready to do. But what about the many things we may want from him that he has said nothing about? What about those?

The first thing to notice is that many of his promises are quite broad. Take the promise, 'Ask and it will be given to you.' It doesn't specify what we are to ask for. We might think of a long list of things not covered by that promise. What kinds of things? Obviously things that are impossible would be on that list, things like making our twelve foot automobile fit in a three-foot garage. Our list would also have on it things that would serve no useful purpose. We wouldn't ask him to transport us quickly to the moon and back. Finally we could not ask him for permission to engage in any and every sin that might tempt us. All of these things would be off limits. Even with these exceptions, however, the promise, 'Ask and it will be given you,' is still quite broad.

What do we learn from this? Taken with the larger context of the whole Bible, we see that God delights in granting his children good things. And not just his children! The Lord Jesus tells us that his Father ‘causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous’ (Mt 5:45). He also says God ‘is kind to the ungrateful and wicked’ (Lk 6:35). We do not come to a reluctant God. If he does not hesitate to do good things for ungrateful and wicked people, how much more will he bless his own! Listen to Paul make this argument. ‘He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?’ (Rom 8:32) Or as the NEB puts the last clause, ‘And with this gift [of his Son] how can he fail to lavish upon us all he has to give?’ As the Psalmist said centuries before, ‘The LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD bestows favor and honor; no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless’ (Ps 84:11).

Still the question remains, ‘How do we get these good things from God?’ Jesus said, ‘And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words’ (Mt 6:7). Do pagans really do that? Yes, we have it on Jesus’ authority. They try to manipulate their gods. Others do something similar. They use ‘prayer wheels’. Prayer wheels are gadgets that spin around and are supposed to repeat the user’s prayer with each revolution. They too are means for manipulating or controlling the gods. All of this, Jesus says, is unnecessary. But once more we come back to this: ‘Even if we don’t need to use force and manipulation, what must we do to receive these promises?’

The answer to this question is both simple and complex. It is simple because it can be answered in a phrase: have faith in

God. It is complex because we must say a number of things about such faith. Do you remember what Jesus said after he told us not to babble or make repetitious prayers as pagans do? He followed that up immediately with these words: ‘Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him’ (Mt 6:8). These words are clearly a call to faith in God. Since he is our Father, and since he knows what we need, Jesus means for us to conclude that he will look after us. That of course does not mean we can never repeat our requests. Repetition often shows how sincerely we want something. However it must never imply that our Father is reluctant to give. Somewhere I read that George Müller who cared for thousands of Britain’s orphans in the 19th century prayed for forty or fifty years for the conversion of two friends. I’m told that both came to Christ a very short time after Müller’s death. The timing was in God’s hands, but he answered Müller’s prayer.

Ask yourself the question: how did my little children get things from me? Isn’t the answer something like this? At times you spontaneously gave them something they needed and at other times you waited for them to ask. If on the other hand you felt they were manipulating you, you were unlikely to give them what they wanted. In the first two instances they were sure you would care for them, that is, they had faith in you. But when you realized they were trying to control you, you tended to withhold what they wanted. If they were doing a conjuror’s trick on you, you didn’t play. If they were going to force a card on you, you wouldn’t take it!

Let’s think first about spontaneous supply from God. How many things do you need in a day? A hundred? A thousand? A million? If you count every supply of energy to each of your organs and cells, the total activities which you demand from mind and body will be staggering.

They will run into the billions even if each organ or cell did only one thing per day! Why? Because we have billions of cells! All of these activities are given us by God, yet we're almost entirely unaware of them! God simply gives them to us. Our Father looks after us. We certainly don't ask for them individually. And, in fact, we do not have to be Christians to receive them. To borrow Jesus' words, we may be ungrateful and wicked.

Much the same thing is true of our spiritual life. In large measure God sustains it without our asking, except in the most general terms. We may pray, 'God bless me' or 'God help me,' but there is too much happening to pray over in detail. Yet our Father takes care of it. As Christians this is true both of our spiritual needs and our physical needs. We know this is so because he is a Father to us. But that's not the only way we know it. He also spells it out for us in his Word. Let me take as an example the popular and familiar verse, Romans 8:28. Many believers have memorized it. But I still wonder how many understand what it says.

Here's what Paul says in Romans 8:28: 'And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.' The verse speaks of Christians. God describes us in two ways. One way spells out what God did; he called us to himself in keeping with his plan. The other way shows the effect in us, – we are 'those who love him'. But what we want to know is: what does the verse mean? For some years I have thought that many believers misunderstand Paul's point. They think that Paul means, 'If I am spiritual enough, or if I have been faithful in my devotions, or if I have witnessed to enough people this week, then there is a lesson in everything that happens to me that God will help me to learn.' But the

verse doesn't mention lessons. It says that everything that happens to me does me good! All of it – no exceptions!

This morning I read of a house that caught on fire. The owner said, 'Though initially devastating, this fire might end up being one of the best things God has ever done for me.' In saying that he was telling us that God is a Father to his people. Paul used the word 'good' to describe what happens to us. This man used the phrase 'one of the best'. He may be right. That would be consistent with our Father's love for his people.

People with gods who are idols may feel that they must control them by whatever means they can. If they suppose their gods can hear them and respond they'll do whatever is necessary to get their way. But if we have a Father in heaven, as every believer does, the last thing we should want is our own way. Why? Because unlike earthly fathers who often mean well, our Father knows everything about us, cares for us with a pure love, and is wise enough to know what to do one hundred times out of one hundred! It would be both tragic and stupid to get him to change his mind, even if we could do so. But we can't! His infinite knowledge, love, and wisdom act together to give us all we need and much more.

Two prayers will illustrate how we must approach him. The first is the prayer the Lord Jesus taught us to pray, 'Thy will be done.' The second is the prayer Jesus used for himself, 'Father, not my will but thine be done.' In the first prayer we do not mention our own will. In the second we mention it but insist that our Father overrule it if it is not also his. Others may try to manipulate their gods. But our prayer is that our Father will control us, not that we may control him.

China

Another visit to China 2006

One day, about fifty years ago, the writer enthused to Dr Lloyd-Jones about Andrew Bonar's 'Life of R.M. McCheyne'. The Doctor replied in kindly tones, "Ah! But William Burns was the man!" After twenty years of pioneering gospel work in seven different parts of China, Burns, physically weakened and prematurely aged by his labours, set forth for the unevangelised northern territory of Manchuria, determined to plant the Standard of the Cross in this barren region. After but a few months there he died in April 1868 saying, "God will carry on the good work. Ah no! I have no fears for that." The following year the Presbyterian Church in Northern Ireland answered Burns appeal and sent two missionaries to carry on the work. After years of hard pioneering preaching and teaching the gospel seed took root and prospered. They were later joined by missionaries from the United Free Church of Scotland. I discovered that Chinese Christians there still remember their Irish roots and retain Presbyterian customs and practices. Manchuria is now part of China embracing the three provinces of Liaoning, Jilin and Heilongjiang.

My training assignment in this region of China this year was to lead a Bible study on 'Church Growth' for full-time church workers. Readers may wonder why I was given this subject, in view of the spectacular and unprecedented growth of the Chinese Church from less than two million in 1978 to almost sixty million today! The simple answer is that this amazing growth has far outstripped the supply of pastor-teachers and experienced



'Barnabas' and a friend.

leaders, indeed there is a real crisis because of this, both in the official Registered Church and the House Churches. My task therefore was to explain what the New Testament says about the marks, nature, function and leadership of the local church. The meetings were held in secret in two cities each lasting four days, with an average attendance of twenty, some from House Churches and some from Registered Churches. Secrecy was necessary because the Chinese government forbids foreigners to speak in religious meetings lest they foment anti-revolutionary feelings and ideas. Further it is well known that religion has frequently played a part in the rebellions that overthrew dynasties. Religion is viewed with increasing suspicion and apprehension by

the authorities as they note with alarm the rapid spread of religion everywhere in China and its encouragement by Western agencies.

My talks, which were conducted in the form of interactive questions and answers rather than lectures, centred on the four church activities of Acts 2:42; Teaching, Fellowship, Breaking of Bread and Prayer. This method made them search the Scriptures for answers to the questions I posed and enabled me, by their answers; to gauge how much or how little they knew about the subject under consideration. A Chinese friend in London translated my notes into Chinese and e-mailed a transcript to the organiser, who photocopied it so that every student could have their own copy at the close of our studies.

Chinese Christians have been under the cruel persecuting yoke of Communism for almost sixty years. They remember that, just over their northern border, Russian Christians were under a similar yoke for seventy years. When I asked our students if they prayed daily for its removal, according to 1 Timothy 2:1-2, I was gratified to hear that very many of them did. So let us do likewise!

A strange phenomenon of the present day Chinese church is, from what I have seen, the great preponderance of women over men. Chairman Mao gave women equal rights with men making China in some respects a unisex society today. Men and women have equal status. While this does not explain the phenomenon it may be a factor to bear in mind. In my meetings women outnumbered men, three to one. But what women! Zealous, plain, frugal, very determined, spiritually minded and joyful in spirit. In all my travels during the past forty years I have seldom, if ever, heard such amazing prayers of praise and intercession – fervent, intense, eloquent, loud and prolonged, heaven taken by

storm! No wonder the Word of God is running very swiftly in China today with such witnesses as these! As William Booth said of his fearless evangelists among the squalor, poverty, drunkenness and violence of industrial slums, “My best men are women!” Such praying was their response to the four days of our studies together. Especially was this the case in our final session on Prayer. Thinking of the evil yoke of Communism and our prayers for its removal, I gave a brief synopsis of Habakkuk and its dynamic relevance to the present situation – the promises of God’s Word will, if believed, bring victory in spite of all appearances to the contrary to patient waiting faith. This generated a sustained outburst of intercessory prayer. When it was over I recalled I had spoken almost identical words in 1976, thirty years ago, to a group of Russian believers near Moscow, and see how God has brought down the seemingly impregnable Soviet Union since then! May he do the same in our days for his people in China.

Barnabas

Singapore

Shalom Church, Singapore was formed in August 1979. The church is currently led by 2 elders and 5 deacons, meeting in a light industrial building. The premises are used as a bookstore (Shalom Christian Media) that seeks to promote and distribute reformed books, not just among the reformed churches but also the general evangelical and even charismatic churches. One of the deacons is running the bookstore fulltime.

The church has been running an annual free eye-check for the residents of a nearby housing estate, as a means of showing our love and concern to the people as well as reaching them with the gospel. From this annual event we now have a regular group of residents that will



A group of keen Chinese students.

come for our Gospel Meetings every month, and recently, we have also started a mid-week Evangelistic Bible Study in one of the homes.

As we head towards the end of the year, this is a typically busy period as we will be having our Shalom Holiday School (outreach to children), Shalom Youth Camp (outreach to teens) as well as our Christmas outreach. In the past two months, a door was opened for Shalom Church to go into a nearby school (Roman Catholic) to give assembly talks and conduct seminars for the primary school boys. This is a prayer answered, as we have sought to reach teens and pre-teens in our area for a number of years. We hope that some of the students will come for our Holiday School at the end of this year.

For the past 10 years, the Lord was pleased to use Shalom support the gospel work in Bangladesh. Our involvement was mainly to train the church leaders and to translate good Christian books from

English into Bengali. We are leaving this ministry in God's hand, to see how he will direct us in the coming days. We thank God for the opportunity to be involved in reaching the majority people of Bangladesh.

People living and working in Singapore are under tremendous pressure, and Shalom members are not spared. This no doubt will have an adverse effect on our spiritual life. There is the need to take a stand against ever-increasing work demands, to know how and where to draw the line, and to be disciplined in maintaining our walk with the Lord.

We appreciate your interest and prayers for us.

In his bonds,
WEI En Yi

He will swallow up death forever, and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces;

The rebuke of his people he will take away from all the earth; For the LORD has spoke. (Isaiah 25:8-9).

Book Review

Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches A Contemporary Ecclesiology

John S Hammett

367 pages paperback, Kregel, 2005

Written from an American Baptist standpoint this book is comprehensive and challenging and is recommended to all Christians. Five sections of the volume are: What is the Church? Who is the Church? How is the Church governed? What does the Church do? Where is the Church going? An annotated bibliography follows each main part. The bibliographies reveal that by comparison with other subjects the doctrine of the church is neglected, and very much so from a Baptist standpoint.

In part one, What is the Church? 114 occurrences of the Greek word *ekklesia* are examined. This is the only section of the book that is technical. An exposition follows on the images of the church as the People of God, the Body of Christ, and the church as a building. The patristic formulation, 'We believe in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church', is set within the context of church history and evaluated (p. 61 ff). The author observes, 'These words (one, holy, catholic, apostolic) are ambiguous. That is why both Protestants and Catholics have been able to affirm them: they fill these terms with different meanings' (p. 62).

The second major section of the book begins with the thought-provoking 'Who'? Who is the Church? Here the biblical basis for holding to a regenerate church membership is thoroughly examined. (See article by Prof Hammett in RT 214). Of course this involves the assessment of what we mean by a credible profession of faith. This matter is anticipated by the earlier section on where the biblical usage of *ekklesia* (called out ones) points to the nature of church membership.

The author grapples with the challenge of believers' children. Do they automatically inherit the right of church membership from their parents? To this the author responds, 'Those who advocate regenerate church membership acknowledge that the children of believing parents have a great blessing and many advantages, but would note that the children of believing parents must still trust Christ personally to be saved, and that until they are saved, they are not proper subjects of baptism, for baptism in the New Testament is baptism of believers only' (p. 85).

Prof Hammett states that the concept of the believers' church has grown increasingly prevalent. It prevails among Pentecostals who now number five hundred million, ten times more than Baptists. But why is it that the practice of a mixed church, believers and unbelievers, prevailed for so many centuries? When did change begin? How did the doctrine of the believers' church develop? These questions are answered clearly (p. 87ff).

From the historical perspective the author turns to his own denomination, the Southern Baptist Convention. It is claimed that with 16 million believers this is the largest evangelical denomination in the world. Prof Hammett discusses the harmful practice of baptising children before they are mature. He calls for reformation and refers to the example of Romanian Baptists: 'no one would think of asking for baptism prior to the age of fourteen' (p. 112). This careful attitude is true of many Baptist groups in Africa and Asia. Reference is also made to Brazil where classes in preparation for baptism can last from six to thirteen weeks. Hammett maintains, 'Regenerate church membership began to disappear when Baptist churches in North America began to baptise and bring in members who gave no visible evidence of regeneration' (p. 113).

Very few pastors have considered seriously the subject of when children reach an age of maturity and it is hard to find anything in writing that explores this practical subject.

With reference to the disappearance of church discipline the author cites Greg Wills, 'No one publicly advocated the demise of discipline -- it simply faded away, as if Baptists had grown weary of holding one another accountable' (p. 113). Greg Wills is quoted again, 'From 1790 to 1860, when Baptist churches maintained high rates of discipline, they also maintained high rates of growth.' Prof Hammett turns to the subject of recovery and reformation. He suggests that the churches can be purged of their unregenerate (mostly absentee) members by the use of church covenants; a method used in earlier times. Three examples, one from 1853, and two contemporary church covenants are printed out in full. The use of an annual covenant can purify a church membership of its non-participant members.

Part three addresses the subject of church government. The author sets out the different forms of church government: Episcopalianism, Presbyterianism and Congregationalism. Helpful diagrams illustrate how these different forms work. Hammett is zealous for congregational church government. This reviewer found his diagrams for Episcopacy and Presbyterianism much more compelling than the one for Congregationalism because it is hard to comprehend how a church can be governed by immature members and in the

case of the Southern Baptists by a mixture of converted and unconverted members. In the Southern Baptist Convention pastors are fired with such frequency that the average tenure for a Southern Baptist pastor is 18 months!

Prof Hammett provides a lucid exposition of the doctrine of elders and deacons. His exposition of eldership is constraining. It is disconcerting therefore to read that Baptists should resist elder rule (p. 157). This contradiction is hard to follow.

Part four of the book bears the title, What does the Church do? Following Acts 2:42-47 a variety of ministries are described, namely, teaching, fellowship, worship, service and evangelism. The meaning and practice of baptism and the Lord's supper are explained in detail. Acts 2:42-47 is foundational to his exposition. That passage includes a specific reference to prayer. Overall in the whole of this book there are only two passing references to prayer whereas it can be argued that in the Bible as a whole and in Acts in particular corporate prayer is centre stage, not a sideline. See for instance Acts 1:14; 4:22 and 12:12.

Part five addresses the theme of the future of the church, Where is the Church going? The author provides an excellent survey of the changing landscapes and major new directions in the evangelical spectrum. He deals with the seeker church movement. He notes of Willow Creek that 'difficult or unpopular elements of the Christian message get shaved off by the marketing method'. And, '7 percent of the messages stress God's holiness and 70 percent his love.' Such distortion he maintains applies to Rick Warren's books on the *Purpose Driven Church* and the *Purpose Driven Life* (p. 309).

Prof Hammett addresses the phenomenon of mega-churches and discusses the problems that beset large assemblies. He considers the subject of the emerging church movement and notes that while this movement has generated a lot of excitement it consists of only a handful of congregations. With regard to the pressures of postmodernism Hammett helpfully points out that for many churches postmodernism is not yet a pressing concern – the shift has not happened everywhere (p.321).

The author takes into his remit the amazing change that has taken place with regard to global evangelical Christianity so that now we are constrained to think multi-racially, multi-nationally and multi-culturally.

The work concludes with a call to be faithful. Prof Hammett deplores the widespread assumption that the only criterion of success in pastoral ministry is numerical growth.

The Hogwoods and Hospitality



Stanley and Marian.

Two funeral services took place for Marian Hogwood (aged 91) who was taken home on November 30. The first was in Newcastle where she had spent the last fourteen years. The second was at Cuckfield. These were remarkable services and the one at Cuckfield was attended by many who had been converted and baptised there. For instance three came all the way from China to be present. Stanley and Marian had one daughter Elizabeth who entered the medical profession and married Nigel Jones who is a surgeon. Fourteen years ago Marian left Cuckfield to live in Newcastle with Nigel and Elizabeth. Nigel is an elder in the Welbeck Road Evangelical Church. David Lovelock is pastor. David preached the gospel very clearly at both funeral services while Elizabeth Jones gave a memorable tribute to her mother.

Marian was one of two daughters of Pastor Benjamin Warburton, the well-known minister at the Brighton Tabernacle. Born in 1915 Marian studied in London and while there met and married Stanley Hogwood. Neither of them were converted. Stanley went off to India as an army officer during the war and was away from 1942 to 1945. While he was away Marian was converted. On return they made their home with Pastor Warburton in Brighton. Stanley, after

much rebellion about spiritual things, was converted at the age of 43 in 1955 under the ministry of Benjamin Warburton, when he preached on Jeremiah 31:3. In June 1958 Stanley suffered a massive coronary attack. The medics doubted that he would survive the night. Marian went downstairs and found a Bible opened at the story of King Hezekiah who was given 15 years to live. She believed that Stanley would survive. In fact he lived a further thirty years. After a recovery period of about six months Stanley determined that he should attempt to reprieve the years the locusts had eaten (Joel 2:25). An opportunity came when Win Perry, the one remaining member of an old dilapidated chapel built in 1772 in Cuckfield, appealed to the Brighton tabernacle for help to stave off closure of the old chapel. Several deacons and members responded. They visited Cuckfield to encourage the work there. However it was Stanley and Marian who caught the vision to revive Zion Baptist Chapel. They faced the stark reality that it would take an all-out effort and dedicated perseverance to achieve success.

They moved from Brighton which is about thirty minutes drive away and took up residence at 13 Lucastes Avenue in nearby Haywards Heath near the railway station. 13 Lucastes Avenue became the headquarters of the operation. Stanley began house-to-house visiting. Gradually a congregation increased. One of the essential marks of an elder is hospitality. 13 Lucastes Avenue became famous for just that. Stanley and Marian heard me preach at the Brighton Tabernacle. That led to an invitation to preach at Cuckfield. By then twelve souls were gathering and a call was issued by them for me to become their part-time pastor. My ministry began in 1962. In 1964 the Holy Spirit worked powerfully and souls were converted. The chapel soon became too small for the numbers attending. The character of the ministry was in the spirit of the reformed theological renewal associated with the Banner of Truth books. Jack Cullum, founder with Iain Murray of the Banner of Truth Trust, took an interest in the work at Cuckfield and joined in some house-to-house visiting. By 1967 the church had grown to the extent that I was obliged to resign a four-day week in London with the Banner of Truth in order to devote all my time to the church at Cuckfield.

Two principal spiritual factors were used by God to achieve his purpose. First was expository, doctrinal, practical preaching. Second was vibrant hospitality at 13 Lucastes Avenue. That style of hospitality was a model, followed by others at Cuckfield. Eventually the membership grew to ninety. There were five elders including John Rubens who works for Evangelical Press and who is now pastor at Newton Aycliffe Evangelical Church in Durham (a church which rejoiced this year in the opening of a fine re-furbished building).

Our spiritual partnership with Stanley and Marian (1962 to 1985) ended when I left to take a pastorate in Liverpool. Stanley 'crossed the river Jordan' in 1986.

A number of significant historical facts belong to this period. In 1970 the magazine *Reformation Today* began. In the same year the Carey Conference for Ministers was initiated and in 1971 the Carey Family Conference commenced under the leadership of John Rubens. From about 1970 the church at Cuckfield encouraged missionary enterprise which supported me in a ministry of international travel. Much encouragement was given to church planting. I was away often three months in the year. This developed into a network of international contact and fellowship which continues to develop today. While I was away, pastors from abroad came to fill my place. Tom Lutz, Martin Holdt and Anton Hoffman were among those who enriched the church by bringing a wider vision. All of this was possible because of the generous spirit exemplified by Stanley and Marian. Their commitment to the chapel at Cuckfield always went alongside a willingness to release their pastor for a wider ministry.

Since it would be hard to find an equal to the hospitality exercised by Stanley and Marian, I will use the style of the English Puritans to analyse its ingredients. It was:

Sabbatical. The whole of Sunday was devoted to the Lord. It was truly Puritan in flavour inasmuch as it was regarded as the market day of the soul. Potato peeling and all culinary and other needful preparations including a prayer meeting took place on Saturday night. Most of the Lord's day was spent at the chapel since there was a Sunday school for children in the afternoon as well as morning and evening service. All guests who stayed at number 13 were expected to attend both services. There was an after-church fellowship on Sunday evening, and following that, Marian and Stanley would between themselves review the day with its plusses and minusses. This often took to midnight. Six hours sleep was enough for Stanley, and next day he would don his bowler hat and head off to London where he worked for the well-known building surveyors George Trollope and Sons near Buckingham Palace. Stanley served many clients including Prime Ministers Edward Heath and Harold Wilson.

Gracious. Everything we have is given to us. 'Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights. He chose to give us birth through the word of truth' (James 1:17). Having received freely we give freely. We do not look for human merit or worthiness but accept people as they are. Grace also means that if there is any glory we lay it at the feet of the Lord Jesus. All were welcomed at number 13, whoever they were. Many who received this hospitality have gone on to emulate it. For example, Mark and Daniel Harding of Exclusive Brethren background were converted at Cuckfield. Mark married Christine also a Cuckfield convert. Now they practise the most unusual hospitality of caring for a full house of AIDS

orphans at a farm in South Africa called *SchepoYa Bana* (Hope for children). See RT 196.

Generous. No pains were spared, and the catering was of a high quality. Sunday dinners and teas were legendary. Stanley and Marian provided excellent English cooked breakfasts for our early morning Saturday elders' meetings. There is much in English tradition that is good and this was exemplified at number 13.

Joyful. Marian was essentially an exuberant person who laughed much. This was a joyful home, a blessed and happy place to be.

Loving. We have known a few who have grasped the doctrines of grace but have not been equally gripped by the grace of the doctrines. Of those graces we are reminded in Colossians 3:12, 'Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.'

Disciplined. Stanley brought his military background and training with him. Timekeeping was of the essence. He was secretary for the church. Marian kept the minutes at church meetings. Stanley acted as chairman at all church meetings. I cannot recall ever chairing a church meeting. Pastors can be prone to preach at church meetings which is the wrong place. A military kind of discipline was good for us all. This permeated the home as well and everyone appreciated knowing the house-rules. You can relax if you know what is acceptable and what not. For instance, when number 13 was full of guests, exact bathroom times were posted so that you could relax and know the bathroom was your very own within the stipulated time. One who regards that period of blessing at Cuckfield as a mini-revival says that Stanley is the only person he knew, who, if had commanded him to jump, he would have jumped without question! But there was a marked absence of legalism.

Pastoral. Stanley and Marian cared for people passionately. Sometimes plain courage is needed to grapple with ugly situations and Stanley excelled in that realm. He would advance even when under heavy fire. Being reminded by Marian, Stanley seemed always in the right place at the right time, irrespective of cost or inconvenience.

International. Overseas students enjoyed number 13 and some came to stay. Thus it was that a Chinese constituency emerged. One guest was Arnold Dallimore, who stayed at number 13 while he was researching to write his wonderful biography of George Whitefield. During that time conversation was dominated by discussion about the 18th century spiritual awakening.

Prayerful. Prayer was primary and all spiritual events were preceded by prayer.

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