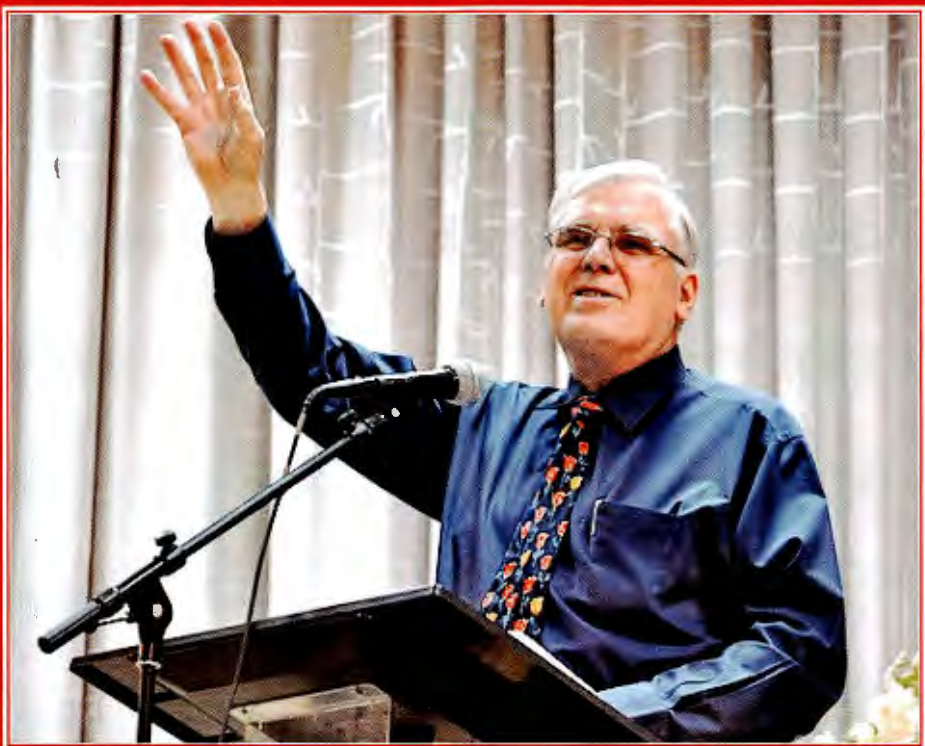


# REFORMATION TODAY



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**Websites** [www.reformation-today.org](http://www.reformation-today.org)

The editor's personal website is <http://www.errollhulse.com>

<http://africanpastorsconference.com>



*Dr Frederick  
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*The editor and his  
wife Lyn*

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Jonathan Bayes is a missionary serving in East Asia. When he is home in Yorkshire he spearheads the Concert of prayer for spiritual awakening. Jonathan Holdt, son of Martin Holdt, is the pastor of Bethany Baptist Church which is situated between Pretoria and Johannesburg. Peter Stead until his recent retirement was pastor of Grace Baptist Church, Halifax. He is now assisting in the church plant in Heap Lane, Bradford. Dr Robert Oliver teaches Church History at London Theological Seminary (LTS). Mostyn Roberts is pastor of the Welwyn Evangelical Church, Hertfordshire. He teaches Systematic Theology at LTS

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*Conrad Mbewe and Martin Holdt*

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Cover picture. *Martin Holdt preaching at Kwabata Baptist Church, Lusaka.*

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## Editorial

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### *A tribute to Martin Holdt*

**M**ARTIN HOLDT, WELL-KNOWN AS A FOREMOST EVANGELICAL AND REFORMED leader in South Africa was suddenly taken from us on the last day of 2011. He preached at the Afrikaans Church in Montana in the morning of Christmas Day. He felt unwell. He was admitted to hospital for tests on Monday. The next day he was diagnosed with liver cancer. His son David, pastor of the Springs Baptist Church, testified that from that point his father sprinted toward heaven which he reached on the last day of the year.

Born in 1941, Martin was converted at the age of 19 in August 1960. He trained for the ministry at the Baptist Theological College in Johannesburg. He was then called to serve in a church of 16 members in Pietersburg (now Polokwane). In his first year there he embraced the doctrines of grace. This assembly grew significantly. Martin was then called to be the Baptist Union's first home church planter and planted churches in Tzaneen, Phalaborwa and Newcastle before being called to an established church in East London. Following that he was called by the Lynnwood Baptist Church to plant another church in the eastern suburbs at Constantia Park in Pretoria, a church from which he retired in 2011. Previously he had spent nine years building up a church near Johannesburg which had declined in numbers. Martin's wife Beryl was called home in September 1996. It was then that Martin was pastor for two years in a well-known church in Hermanus in the Cape.

It was Martin's daily practice to retire early at 9.00 PM and to rise for prayer and Bible study at 3.00 every morning. This not only gave him an extensive uninterrupted time for Bible reading, prayer, preparation and study but empowered him spiritually. He was gifted with a metabolism to maintain this regime and also keep physically fit. He trained for marathon events including the famous 54-mile Comrades Marathon. His best time for the 26-mile event was two hours 50 minutes.

The call came to return to Constantia Park Baptist Church. Martin married Elsabé du Plessis who is an anaesthetist. Constantia Park has been responsible for church plants in Birchleigh, Kempton Park and in Elardus Park.

Martin always had a concern for the Afrikaans-speaking people of South Africa and was rector of the Afrikaans Baptist Seminary. In recent years sixty percent of his preaching was in Afrikaans.

Noteworthy are three ministries which have been the subject of exceptional blessing. The first is the *Grace Conferences* which began 21 years ago and have increased in attendance to about 400. The second is the Augustine Bookroom which has become a well-known and highly successful literature centre under the leadership of Elsabé. The third was radio and TV ministry. Martin enjoyed much regular time with Radio Pulpit which has studios in Pretoria.

Martin was vitally concerned for the advance of the gospel of Christ worldwide. Every Lord's Day he made sure that a talented member presented a missionary focus and described a country using information from *Operation World*. A high standard of presentation was developed. He encouraged reading. At almost every service he reviewed and commended a book.

He was a supporter of the annual Banner of Truth Ministers' Conference in Leicester and was a visiting preacher there and at the Youth Conference which precedes it. He was particularly supportive of churches in Germany. If he had been given two lives he would have spent one of them in Germany.

Martin is survived by five adult children, two of whom are Baptist pastors in South Africa, and his wife Elsabé.

### *The Great Ejection*

This year is the 350th anniversary of the infamous Act of Uniformity (24 August 1662). 'The crowning piece of folly which the majority in the Church of England committed under the Stuarts was procuring the Act of Uniformity to be enacted in the year 1662...This famous act imposed terms and conditions of holding office on all ministers of the Church of England which had never been imposed before from the time of the Reformation. It was notoriously so framed as to be offensive to the consciences of the Puritans, and to drive them out of the Church...Within a year no fewer than 2,000 clergymen resigned their livings rather than accept its terms. Many of these 2,000 were the best, the ablest, and the holiest ministers of the day...Taking all things into consideration, a more impolitic and disgraceful deed never disfigured the annals of a Protestant Church.' J. C. Ryle, *Light from Old Times* (Coronation Edition: London, 1902), p. 316. See article by pastor Gary Brady.

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## Christ as Prophet

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**A**LL THE MINISTRY OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST FOR HIS Church can be subsumed under three offices: prophet, priest and king.

Christ was at work as prophet/teacher from the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden to the giving of the Revelation to the apostle John on the island of Patmos. An example is described in Judges. Our Lord conversed with Samson's parents and left them in a fiery plume: 'And as Manoah and his wife watched, the LORD did an amazing thing. As the flames from the altar shot up towards the sky, the angel of the LORD ascended in the fire' (Judges 13:20 NLT). Manoah was sure that having seen God they would die but his wife reasoned wisely. ' "We are doomed to die!" he said to his wife. "We have seen God!" But his wife answered, "If the LORD had meant to kill us, he would not have accepted a burnt offering and grain offering from our hands, nor shown us all these things or now told us this." '

The Trinity is at work concurrently but each Person is to the fore in one way or another. It is Christ who lived as a man and died on the cross. It is the Holy Spirit who came down on the Son at his baptism and upon the 120 in the upper room on the Day of Pentecost and it is the Spirit who inspired every part of Scripture. At various points in the progress of revelation Christ enters. Here I am going to choose five prominent points of Christ's revelatory activity as prophet in the history of redemption.

*The revelation given to Moses*

*The revelation given to the major prophets*

*The revelation given to his apostles*

*The revelation given to the apostle Paul*

*The revelation given to John*

### **The revelation given to Moses**

The Old Testament proper begins with the calling of Moses, the author of the five books of the Bible which we call the Pentateuch. Why did the Lord choose to stand in a burning bush as he talked with and commissioned Moses? Matthew Henry comments on the bush which burned but was not

reduced to ash, ‘This fire was not in a tall and stately cedar, but *in a bush, a thorny bush*, so the word signifies; for God chooses the weak and despised things of the world, such as Moses, now a poor shepherd, with them to confound the wise; he delights to beautify and crown the humble. *The bush burned, and yet was not consumed*; an emblem of the Church now in bondage in Egypt, burning in the brick-kilns, yet not consumed; perplexed but not in despair, cast down but not destroyed.’

In this first meeting Moses stubbornly resisted the call to return to Egypt provoking the Lord’s anger. Further personal meetings ensued. This is confirmed in Exodus 32 and seen when Aaron and Miriam rebelled against the leadership of Moses.

‘Then the LORD came down in a pillar of cloud; he stood at the entrance to the tent and summoned Aaron and Miriam. When the two of them stepped forward, he said, “Listen to my words: When there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, reveal myself to them in visions, I speak to them in dreams. But this is not true of my servant Moses; he is faithful in all my house. With him I speak face to face, clearly and not in riddles; he sees the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?” ’ (Num 12:5-8).

During the wilderness journey the Lord visited Moses regularly by way of theophany. He taught and guided Moses in the establishment of law, moral, civil and ceremonial. Twice he personally inscribed the tablets of stone with the moral law (Ex 31:18; 34:28). He is the only person who has kept the moral law perfectly. Then it was he who in the desert gave Moses precise specifications for the building of the tabernacle and the sacrificial system. He also prescribed in detail the duties of the priests.

### **The revelation given to the major prophets**

The role of Christ as prophet in commissioning the major prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel is described in detail. I am not suggesting that Christ was not active in the calling and work of the other prophets such as Daniel (*cf* Dan 9:4-6) but much detail is given in the calling of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. In each case the calling is designed to equip the prophet in the face of overwhelming difficulty and opposition. Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel ministered through the traumatic time of the destruction of

Jerusalem and the exile in Babylon. Here I will focus in particular on Ezekiel.

Remember Ezekiel's call? He saw gigantic wheels moving at lightning speed from one end of the horizon to the other. The wheels were complex in detail. Most striking is the throne carried above the wheels. On that throne was a figure like that of a man. 'I saw that from what appeared to be his waist up he looked like glowing metal, as if full of fire, and that from there down he looked like fire; and brilliant light surrounded him. Like the appearance of a rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the radiance around him. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. When I saw it, I fell face down, and I heard the voice of one speaking' (Ezk 1:27-28).

Ezekiel was made strong for his work. The exiles did not arrive in Babylon in a repentant condition. On the contrary they were angry, resentful and rebellious. 'Son of man, do not fear them. Don't be afraid even though their threats are sharp as thorns and barbed like briars, and they sting like scorpions. Do not be dismayed by their dark scowls. For remember, they are rebels! You must give them my messages, whether they listen or not. But they won't listen for they are completely rebellious!' (Ezk 2:6-7 NLT). Ezekiel was given strength to persevere. 'He was like "emery, harder than flint" (emery = *samīr*, perhaps diamond; cf. Jer 17:1 as diamond can cut into glass and as a flint knife is extremely sharp, so the prophet can cut away their resistance'. [Peter Naylor, *Ezekiel*, EP, 2001]. Hence in the face of angry hostility Ezekiel was given courage and gritty determination.

Ezekiel lived among the exiles. He sat where they sat. From start to finish he obeyed the commands of the chief prophet. Using symbolic forms he impressed upon the exiles the reasons for their captivity. Ezekiel's enduring ministry prepared the exiles for their eventual return to Judah.

### **The revelation given to his apostles**

The incarnation is the high point of revelation. In the incarnation Jesus, born of the virgin Mary, came personally to reveal the truth to mankind. He did this by the way he lived and especially in his propitiating death. He did it too by teaching truth to his apostles. This is the apex of revelation and is eloquently expressed in Hebrews 1:1-2: 'In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways,

but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe.'

Knowledge of the Father comes directly through Christ (John 1:17-18, 6:63, 7:17, 8:12, 14, 19; Heb. 1:2). In him 'are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge' (Col 2:3).

Can you imagine the privilege of being a companion of the Son of God for three years? How can such a thing be expressed? In my view the best description comes from the pen of the apostle John: 'That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We write this to make our joy complete' (1 John 1:1-4).

The important issue in the incarnation is that reliable witnesses were able to record the facts. That is why we have the four Gospels, each different in character as are their authors. John Mark, once out of favour with Paul, wrote a shorter Gospel account. Matthew, the tax collector's Gospel has a Jewish flavour. Luke was a Gentile, a physician and an historian. He was meticulous in his accurate descriptions of Jesus' teaching and miracles. Matthew, Mark and Luke made use of the testimony of the apostles and other eye-witnesses. John, described as 'the disciple whom Jesus loved', was the nearest to our Lord and was ideally competent to record his sayings and teachings and describe his life, death and resurrection.

Mark and Luke were not apostles but they based their observations on the testimony of the apostles. I suggest we should see Jesus as the supreme prophet surrounded by witnesses and in particular four expert recorders and collators of the data, namely, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. We do not have films of Jesus but in print we have four marvellous written records. Cynics, agnostics and atheists, have you read the Gospels? Can you prove these narrators false? How can you not believe?



## **The revelation given to the apostle Paul**

It is not overstating the matter to say that the apostle Paul is the most influential Christian in the history of the Church. Not counting the letter to the Hebrews, which does not bear his style of writing, Paul is responsible for 28 percent of the New Testament. Luke is not far behind with 23 percent. Paul is the giant theologian of the New Testament.

His calling took place on the road to Damascus. Paul's conversion experience is reported by Luke in Acts 22 where Paul testified before a wild crowd in Jerusalem and again in more detail before King Agrippa as recorded in Acts 26. This testimony shows that there was much more in Paul's calling than a short exchange of words. The prophet supreme commissioned Paul in some detail as we glean from Acts 26:12-20:

‘On one of these journeys I was going to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. About noon, O King, as I was on the road, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, blazing around me and my companions. We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.”

‘Then I asked, “Who are you, Lord?”

“I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,” the Lord replied. “Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen of me and what I will show you. I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.”

‘So then, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven. First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and to the Gentiles also I preached that they should repent and turn to God and demonstrate their repentance by their deeds.’

It is clear from this testimony that Christ as prophet prescribed the message and outlined the extent of the ministry of Paul who became the leading church-planting missionary. He was inspired in becoming the principal theologian of the New Testament. At critical times Jesus

appeared to his foremost apostle to encourage and instruct him as Luke records in Acts 18:9; 23:11 and 22:18-21.

### **The revelation given to John**

It is fitting that Christ who taught Moses the first author of Scripture should directly inspire the conclusion of Holy Scripture. The appearance of Christ as prophet to John on Patmos is amazing. The letters to the seven churches are given by the direct speech of Christ. The rest of the book of Revelation is conveyed by the ministry of an angel to which that work was delegated by Christ (Rev 1:1; 22:16).

This is another example of God working through human frailty and weakness. John was between 80 and 90 years old. How did this final book in the canon of Scripture find its way out of a prison camp on a remote Greek island? We do not know but we do know that the *apokalupsis* is beautiful in symbolism, in purpose and in its message. It is designed to comfort and strengthen all believers living in all epochs right up to the second coming of Christ.

William Hendriksen was a prolific author and commentator. The best book he ever wrote is a commentary on Revelation with the title *More than Conquerors*. The reason for my saying this is that he demonstrates that Revelation is a message for everyone living in every generation. I am aware that there are recent outstanding scholarly commentaries such as *The Book of Revelation*, Greg Beale, New International Greek Testament, Commentary, Eerdmans, and *Revelation*, Grant Osborne, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament but if you are a beginner read Hendriksen.

Christ is prophet to every believer united to him by faith.

‘All things have been committed to me by my Father. No-one knows who the Son is except the Father, and no-one knows who the Father is except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him’ (Luke 10:22). In regeneration the believer is given a personal revelation (*apokalupsai* - aorist) that Christ is the Son of God. Such a revelation is referred to as a decisive event. That is not easy for those who have not experienced a clear sudden conversion but have come gradually to Christ. If, reader, that is a problem with you the question is, Do you believe at this moment that Jesus is the eternal Son of God? John assures us that ‘everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God’ (1 John 5:1).

*Editor*

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## The Great Ejection

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Gary Brady

**T**HIS YEAR SEES THE 350<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF WHAT IS KNOWN as the Great Ejection, when about two thousand ministers and others in the pay of the National Church in England and Wales were silenced or ejected from their livings for failing to conform to what the Church of England required.



Gary Brady

Most of the names of the men who were ejected and their wives who suffered with them are unfamiliar to us, though names such as Richard Baxter, Thomas Manton, Thomas Watson and John Howe should mean something to you. Though some few good men did remain in the National Church, Gerald Bray is right to say that almost all of the ejected 'were Puritans, and so the Act may be said to represent the expulsion of Puritanism from the National Church.'

It is right therefore that those who claim to admire the Puritans should know something of this history. However, discovering good material on the subject is not easy and in an attempt to remedy this I have established an internet blog ([www.greatejection.blogspot.com](http://www.greatejection.blogspot.com)) and a short book that *Evangelical Press* hopes to publish this year. We have also arranged a one-day study conference at the *Evangelical Library* in London on March 27.

In 1962, speaking at the *Evangelical Library*, Dr Lloyd-Jones said that practically all that is good in evangelicalism finds its roots in the Puritans. He also declared that 'the very greatness of the men themselves as men of God demands our attention'. That testimony ought to be heeded.

### Joseph Alleine

Take as just one example of such men, Joseph Alleine 1634-1668, the author of the posthumous bestseller *Alarm to the Unconverted*. He was ejected from his living in 1662 and imprisoned in Ilchester the following year. His older brother Edward had been a minister but had died aged only 26. This prompted Joseph to enter the ministry. In 1655 Alleine married his cousin, Theodosia Alleine, whose father Richard Alleine 1610-1681, and uncle William Alleine 1613/14-1677, were also ejected. Theodosia subsequently wrote of her husband that 'He would be much troubled if he heard smiths or shoemakers, or such tradesmen, at work at their trades, before he was in his duties with

God: saying to me often, "O how this noise shames me! Doth not my Master deserve more than theirs?"'

She also tells how they were at home one Saturday evening in 1663 when her husband was seized by an officer of their town. The officer was reluctant to perform this duty but was forced to by his superiors.

The warrant required Alleine to appear at the house of a Justice about two miles out of town. He asked if he could eat with his family first. This was initially denied but a prominent man in the town agreed to guarantee his speedy appearance after that. Theodosia continues, 'His supper being prepared, he sat down, eating very heartily, and was very cheerful, but full of holy and gracious expressions, suitable to his and our present state.'

After supper, having prayed with the family, he went with the officer and some friends to the Justice's house, where he was accused of breaking the law by preaching, which he denied. He was accused of 'being at a riotous assembly' though involved in nothing but preaching and prayer.

'Then he was much abused with many scorns and scoffs from the justices and their associates, and even the ladies as well as the gentlemen often called him rogue, and told him that he deserved to be hanged, ... with many such like scurrilous passages, which my husband receiving with patience, and his serene countenance showing that he did slight the threatenings, made them the more enraged. They then urged him much to accuse himself, but in vain.'

'Despite a lack of evidence, after keeping him until twelve with their abuse and mocking, they made out an arrest warrant committing him to gaol the following Monday. It was about two in the morning by the time he was home so he lay on his bed still dressed to sleep for a few hours before rising to pray at about eight o'clock, by which time several friends had arrived. He was not allowed to preach but was free to speak with the various groups that flocked in from the town and nearby villages and to pray with them.'

Theodosia continues: 'He was exceeding cheerful in his spirit, full of admiration of the mercies of God, and encouraging all that came to be bold, and venture all for the Gospel and their souls, notwithstanding what was come upon him for their sakes. For, as he told them, he was not at all moved at it, nor did not in the least repent of anything he had done, but accounted himself happy under that promise Christ makes ... that he should be doubly and trebly blessed now he was to suffer for his sake; and was very earnest with his brethren in the ministry that came to see him, that they would not in the least desist when he was gone, that there might not be one sermon the less in Taunton; and with the people, to attend the ministry with greater ardency,

diligence, and courage than before; assuring them how sweet and comfortable it was to him to consider what he had done for God in the months past; and that he was going to prison full of joy, being confident that all these things would turn to the furtherance of the gospel, and the glory of God.

‘Not wanting to leave his people without some final words, he met with them in the small hours of the following morning. Several hundred gathered to hear him preach and pray for about three hours. At about nine, again with friends accompanying him, he set out for Ilchester. The streets were lined with people on either side. Many followed him out of the town for several miles, earnestly lamenting their loss. Alleine was very moved by all this but did his best to look cheerful and say something encouraging. He carried his arrest warrant himself, and had no officer with him. When he came to the prison the gaoler was not there so he took opportunity to preach one final time before entering, which he was later vilified for. When the gaoler came, he delivered his warrant and was clapped up in the Bridewell chamber, which is over the common gaol.’

On arriving, Alleine found there his friend John Norman 1622-1669 from Bridgwater, imprisoned a few days before. Norman’s great fear was ending up as an indentured labourer on one of the plantations of the West Indies, a realistic fear for Nonconformists at that time.

Alleine spent the next four months in this hole. At that time the gaol held 50 Quakers, 17 Baptists and about 12 others who, like Alleine, had been arrested for preaching and praying. Through the summer months the heat inside the low-ceilinged prison was quite unbearable. There was little privacy and nowhere to eat. Night and day they could hear the singing, the cursing and the clanking chains of the criminals in the cells below. The professed Quakers could be a nuisance too.

Alleine and his companions took it in turns to preach and pray publicly once or twice a day. There were usually crowds from the villages around listening at the bars of the prison. The rest of the day was spent speaking to those who thronged to him for counsel and instruction. He would spend much of the night studying and in prayer. He was allowed to curtain off a corner of the room big enough for his bed, where he could pray in private. Theodosia bravely chose to share imprisonment with him. After some weeks he was allowed to walk in the countryside, if the gaoler was willing. Friends supplied him with food and money and he stayed healthy in body and mind.

On 14 July he was taken to court in Taunton and indicted for preaching. Despite a lack of evidence he was returned to prison where he and his companions would soon have to face the cold of winter, every bit as trying as the heat of summer. It was a whole twelve months before he was released. He

kept busy writing books including an exposition of the Shorter Catechism. There were also weekly letters to his people, a number of which were later collected and published. He also sent out catechisms for distribution among poor families. When the gaol chaplain fell ill, Alleine dared to take his place, and, until prohibited, preached to the criminals in the gaol and helped them in other ways. He was much in prayer throughout his time in prison.

Once free again Alleine set about his work with alacrity but some three years on he was re-arrested, along with his wife, her aged father, seven other ministers and 40 others. Alleine was not well when he entered prison this second time and it greatly weakened him so that after returning to Taunton in February, 1668, his health broke down completely. Nine months later, at the age of only 34, weary from hard work and suffering, he died.

How such a story should stir us up to zeal for serving the Lord in our generation. This is only one example of such faithfulness among hundreds. As Spurgeon once said, these were men who counted nothing their own. They were driven out from their benefices, because they could not conform to the Established Church, and they gave up all they had willingly to the Lord. They were hunted from place to place ... they wandered here and there to preach the gospel to a few poor sheep, being fully given up to their Lord. Those were foul times; but they promised they would walk the road fair or foul, and they did walk it knee-deep in mud; and they would have walked it if it had been knee-deep in blood too.

### **The events that lay behind all this**

What led up to Alleine's ejection, imprisonment and eventual death was a series of far-reaching events in the political sphere. Firstly, in May 1660, the monarchy was restored. Charles II, heir to Charles I, who had been executed in January 1649, was recalled. Although many good men were keen to see the monarchy re-established they did not realise what it would lead to. For a while things were moderately bearable for the Puritans but a series of acts were passed against them between 1661 and 1665, acts that since the 19<sup>th</sup> century have together been known as the Clarendon Code, after the Lord Chancellor, Edward Hyde, the first Lord Clarendon.

#### *The Corporation Act*

The first of the four acts was the Corporation Act of December 1661. It required three things from all municipal officials - mayors, aldermen, councillors, borough officials. These were an oath of allegiance to the throne, a formal rejection of the Solemn League and Covenant and the taking of communion in the parish church within a year of taking office. Its effect was

to exclude Nonconformists from public office and some conscientious dissenters lost important posts. Further, some unscrupulous corporations took advantage of the situation and voted such men into office then fined them when they declined to serve!

### *The Act of Uniformity*

Obviously with the accession of a new ruler a new *Act of Conformity* was expected. Once Charles' new Parliament was in place they brought in such a bill. The bill was so strict that it was almost impossible for even the least dogmatic of the Puritans to accept it with a clear conscience. The act received royal assent on 29 July, 1662. It gave all ministers of the Church of England, university fellows, school teachers and private tutors too, until 24 August, St Bartholomew's Day, to conform to its demands or be ejected.

Ministers were expected to affirm the supremacy of the monarch in all things ecclesiastical and spiritual and to signify 'unfeigned assent' to everything in the forthcoming Book of Common Prayer. Most were unable to see this book in time, as it was not out until 6 August. Those who had not been ordained by a bishop were also expected to be re-ordained. Further, there was again the need to repudiate the hated Solemn League and Covenant and to acknowledge that the oath taken to maintain it involved no moral obligation. A declaration was further required that it was unlawful under any pretence whatever to take up arms against the king.

### **The Great Ejection**

Estimates vary but it seems that, including those ejected before 1662 and some who jumped rather than waiting to be pushed, two thousand were silenced or ejected. There will always be some vagueness about the figure as some changed their minds. A G Matthews says some 210 later conformed.

Edmund Calamy's *Nonconformist Memorial* deals with some 2,465 people altogether. Matthews and Michael Watts say that the number unwilling to conform in 1662 was 2,029. Some 200 of these were university lecturers. Matthews points out that a further 129 were deprived at an uncertain date between 1660 and 1663 and with the ejections of 1660 as well, he gives a total of 1,760 ministers (about 20% of the clergy) thrust out of the Church of England, silenced from preaching or teaching because they could no longer conform by law and so deprived of a livelihood.

Many preached farewell sermons the week before their ejection and some of these are still in print. Robert Adkins, ejected from St John's, Exeter, spoke for many when he said in his farewell sermon: 'Let him never be accounted a

sound Christian that doth not fear God and honour the king. I beg that you would not suffer our Nonconformity, for which we patiently bear the loss of our places, to be an act of unpeaceableness and disloyalty. We will do anything for His Majesty but sin. We will hazard anything for him but our souls. We hope we could die for him, only we dare not be damned for him. We make no question, however we may be accounted of here, we shall be found loyal and obedient subjects at our appearance before God's tribunal.'

There was absence of resentment and invective. Great though their sorrow was for their flocks and for their nation, they had a message to preach which was more than equal to the strain of the crisis. An eternal God, an ever-living Saviour and a glorious hope of heaven carried them through this heaviest trial.

### **Persecution**

The years 1660 to 1689 saw great variation in the levels of persecution and understandably things varied from place to place. The persecution launched against the ejected also swept into its net others already outside the National Church. John Bunyan is the most famous example. He was imprisoned in 1660 and remained there for the best part of the next 12 years. His congregation had previously been meeting in the parish church in Bedford but that all came to an end with the Restoration. Their conscientious stand for the truth and their great courage and wisdom in the face of persecution give an example that ought to be known and emulated.

#### *Conventicle Act*

In 1664 a third act was passed banning religious gatherings of more than five people over the age of 16, apart from family members, unless using Church of England rites. Penalties for breaking this law were very strict. A first offence merited three months in prison or a £5 fine. A second offence saw the penalty doubled, a third would meet with transportation to America for seven years or a fine of £100.

#### *Five Mile Act*

In 1665 a particularly cruel law was passed. Known as the Five Mile Act, this act forbade the ejected to live within five miles of their former place of abode. The idea was to try and cut them off from their former congregations, who usually remained loyal. It is this act that now drove ministers into obscure and isolated places and that necessitated long, secret journeys in order to circumvent the law. This is when secret meetings began to take place and when tricks such as having the minister preach in one room while the



congregation listened in another began to come in. The act expired on 1 March, 1669. Along with Clarendon's fall in 1667 this meant some relief for the dissenters. It was short lived, however, as in July 1669, prompted by Parliament, Charles made a proclamation urging magistrates to continue to use the outstanding laws against Nonconformists.

### *The Second Conventicle Act*

In 1670 a second Conventicle act was passed. Famously described by the poet Andrew Marvell as 'the quintessence of arbitrary malice', it reduced penalties for ordinary worshippers but fines for preachers and the owners of places where conventiclers were found went up to £20 for a first offence, £40 for a second. The idea of distraint was also introduced, the seizure of a person's property in order to obtain payment. If the minister could not pay, wealthier members of the congregation could lawfully be plundered.

### *Indulgences and waves of persecution*

In 1672 and 1683 Charles II then James II decreed indulgences but, unsupported in Parliament by law, these did not last and the pattern of persecution continued in most places. The Broadmead Baptists wrote of some eight waves of persecution altogether and it is clear that, as is often the case to this day, persecution did come in waves. Typically again, it varied in form and intensity, from minor harassment to mass imprisonment. Various factors were involved such as one's willingness to adapt to the situation and the attitude of local magistrates.

Matthews suggests that 12.4% of the ejected men, some 215 altogether, were imprisoned between 1662 and the death of Charles II in 1685. Most were in prison for short periods but others for lengthy terms. Some seven ministers actually died in prison.

### **Providence**

There was a Bible-taught confidence among dissenters that their sufferings were working for them 'a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory'. When Joseph Oddy was taunted by a Cambridge wit with the doggerel lines:

Good day, Mr Oddy,  
Pray, how fares your body?  
Methinks you look damnably thin.

He shot back with

That, sir's, your mistake,  
'Tis for righteousness' sake;  
Damnation's the fruit of your sin.

Dissenters were not slow to see in various providences God's hand encouraging them and dealing with their persecutors. What else could one make of the Great Plague, the Great Fire of London and the war with the Dutch, too, for that matter? 'Nonconformist writings abound,' says Michael Watts, 'in stories of disasters which befell individual persecutors.'

Positively, Philip Henry, father of Matthew, observed in old age that though many of the ejected were brought very low, had many mouths to feed, were greatly harassed by persecution and their friends were generally poor and unable to support them, yet, in all his acquaintance, he never knew, nor could remember to have heard of any Nonconformist minister being in prison for debt.

### **Toleration**

Relief from direct persecution finally came for the Nonconformists with the Toleration Act of 1689, when King William and Queen Mary came to the throne. In that year Particular Baptists finally felt free to publish their Confession of Faith, the work having been completed back in 1677. Nonconformists continued to be treated as second-class citizens even then, being practically barred from Oxford and Cambridge Universities, for example, until as late as 1828. At least the worst of the persecution was over.

### **Self-examination**

Lloyd-Jones says of the men we have been considering that above all, they have left us this noble, glorious, wonderful example of holy living, patient endurance in suffering, and loyalty to the Word of God and its message, even at the cost of being 'fools for Christ's sake' and being regarded as 'the offscouring of all things'.

A consideration of these men and the stand that they took should, at the very least, stir us to holiness, patience when we suffer and a strong commitment to being ruled by God's Word.

Their example calls upon us to examine ourselves and to see where we stand. What is the state of the Church? What about my own part in it? How can we expect God to bless us if we are not willing to ask ourselves serious questions about such things?

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## The Concert of Prayer

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**W**HEN THE YORKSHIRE REFORMED Ministers' Fraternal issued the call to prayer just about a year ago, we had no idea where it would lead. At that time the fraternal called the churches of Yorkshire together for a Saturday morning of united prayer in Leeds for the outpouring of God's Spirit. Burdened by the deplorable state of the nation, the weakness of the churches, and our own lethargy as believers, we recognised that, unless God comes in power, our situation is utterly hopeless.

Following that initial meeting in March last year, there was a widespread sense that we must maintain the momentum of prayer. Three further events took place during 2011, and the number of people involved increased. Clearly, the call to prayer was timely. It had touched a nerve in the spiritual sensitivity of many Christians across Yorkshire.

We are convinced that this movement of prayer must be sustained. We do not want to organise things so minutely that enthusiasm and spontaneity are killed. However, without organisation and encouragement the momentum is likely to

be lost. In organising the Concert of Prayer, we are endeavouring to provide a suitable channel for people's desire to pray that

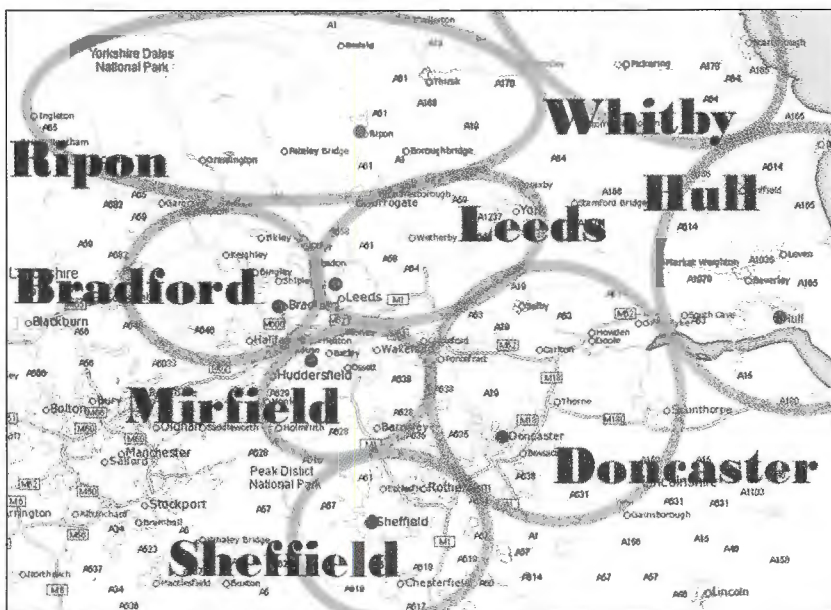
God will visit his people and bless us with better days for the gospel and kingdom of Christ.

The first united prayer gatherings of 2012 were planned for Saturday February 11<sup>th</sup>. Eight meetings took place simultaneously across Yorkshire. But what has thrilled us so much is that friends in other parts of the country have heard or read about what is happening in Yorkshire, and have been motivated to join the Concert of Prayer. Meetings will be taking place at the same time, to our knowledge, in the neighbouring counties of Durham and Lancashire, and also further afield in Newcastle upon Tyne, Suffolk, Kent, Sussex and Hampshire.

We had planned to hold another county-wide event in Yorkshire on April 21<sup>st</sup>, but the venue which we usually use turned out to be



*Jonathan Bayes*



*Map showing some of the satellites for February 11th 2012*

unavailable that day. We are therefore planning a network of several meetings at a few key venues around Yorkshire. What is so encouraging is that more areas of the country are planning to join the concert on that occasion. Meetings are already being planned in Devon and Derbyshire.

Let this report be a plea. Wouldn't it be wonderful if this Concert of Prayer soon covered the entire nation? Could you spearhead something in your area? There is, of course, nothing magical about all praying simultaneously, and indeed, we are aware of other groups – in London, Ireland, and Scotland – who are already holding meetings of prayer

for revival at other times. If the dates arranged by brothers in Yorkshire are not suitable where you live, then go ahead and do something at a time convenient for you. Nevertheless, there is something powerfully symbolic about people all over the country crying out to the Lord for the same thing at the same time. It is a wonderful testimony to our unity in Christ, and to our common recognition of our total helplessness and absolute dependence upon God to revive his work. Let us press on in the work of the gospel, even in these difficult days, and may the Lord be pleased to heed our cries, and pour out his Spirit in revival blessing.

*Jonathan Bayes*

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## Recovering the Prayer Meeting

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*Jonathan Holdt*

**W**HEN GOING INTO BATTLE against a formidable foe it is very important that an army understands very clearly the instructions from the commander. The needs of the army also need to be communicated to the commander so that strategic decisions can be made and help given where needed. Without this vital communication the battle will be disjointed and many defeats will follow.

Prayer is the means God has given his people to seek him for wisdom and guidance as well as to express the needs we have in the battle we are fighting against the powers of darkness. God in his sovereign wisdom has ordained prayer as a vital means for his people to enjoy fellowship with him, be strengthened and guided by him as well as gain the victory in advancing the cause of Christ on earth.

When God's people have rallied together and heeded the Word of God in the commands and exhortations to pray, great blessing has followed. Ministries are built up, people are saved from sin, broken lives are healed and the church grows and prospers. I remember, just following

my conversion in 1992, joining together with God's people in prayer. Of particular interest was the Sunday evening prayer meeting where between 30 to



*Jonathan Holdt*

40 believers gathered together to pray exclusively for the power of God's Spirit on the preached Word. It was a season in the history of Emmanuel Baptist Church where my father was the preacher, when the Lord bestowed unusual blessing. Numerous people were converted and the Sunday evening service was jam-packed as people gathered to hear the Word of God. It was not the singing that attracted people, although that too was blessed as we sang hymns and songs that were rich in truth and gave glory to Christ. Rather it was the Word of God that was attended with unusual power. We hung upon every word that was expounded. Our hearts were stirred and there was a joy and deep fellowship among God's people that can only be described as Spirit-anointed. What was the reason for such blessing? Well, clearly it was a sovereign work of God. No, it was not revival but it certainly was a time of rich spiritual blessing and growth

in the life of the church. Yet, God did not move in this instance without stirring his people up to prayer. We felt a burden to pray and pray we did!

It was at this time that a few young adults would get away to a remote farm in the Magaliesberg to spend whole mornings in prayer and even on one occasion to pray through the night. The result of that all-night prayer meeting was to motivate an inner city outreach into a slum area which lasted for a good number of years when the gospel was taken in a number of instances to people on their death beds. The point is that when God moves he stirs us to pray. Surely then it ought to be the believers' desire to see the prayer meetings blessed again that we might experience the grace and power of God in greater measure than we currently do. While most believers would agree whole heartedly with the importance of prayer and give their 'Amen's' to sermons on prayer, few, it would seem, have any burden to attend the prayer meeting. Our prayer meetings are attended by a handful. Often our prayers seem tame and weak and lack any real fervency. Why is this? The main problem is time (see editorial note).

Have you thought, 'I have no time to go to the prayer meeting'? This is a common objection of many Christians today. There is so much else to be done e.g. lie in bed and catch up on some much needed sleep,

go shopping, get started early in doing some gardening or do maintenance around the home, or other important business to attend to. The list of excuses as to why not to attend the prayer meeting can be extended but at the heart of it all is the excuse, 'I cannot spare the time.'

It may well be that the traditional times for prayer meetings need to be re-thought and re-worked. Also much attention may be needed to improve the prayer meeting which can easily fall into a rut. This subject is very extensive and I am sure *Reformation Today* will publish more material on this vital matter and perhaps even become a journal which describes a national spiritual awakening which will flow out of the Concert of Prayer for revival.

#### *Editorial note*

In this time of recession severe employment cuts have meant that some have to perform the work of two instead of one which is a recipe for exhaustion. This has an adverse effect on all mid-week meetings, not only the prayer meeting. Recently a church with a membership of about 160 announced that a prayer meeting would take place immediately after a church lunch on the Lord's Day. 160 attended which included children. Small groups clustered for prayer. This experiment was very successful. This idea may be a way forward for some churches.

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# The Beginning of the Church in France

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*Frederick Hodgson*

**V**IENNE LIES ON THE RIVER RHÔNE ABOUT 20 MILES TO THE south of Lyon. Today the city, which is a centre of the food industry in the region, is also a tourist attraction partly because of its ancient Roman remains such as the Temple d'Auguste et de Livie which was erected by order of the Emperor Claudius. Before the Roman soldiers under Julius Caesar conquered the region in 47 BC, Vienne was the capital city of the Allobroges, a branch of the Gauls. The town became an important Roman colony and subsequently was the provincial capital for the Romans.

In 43 BC one of Caesar's officers, Munatius Plancus, converted a Gaulish hill-fort into another colony called Lugdunum. This colony eventually became Lyon. Agrippa recognised the strategic position of Lyon at the confluence of two navigable rivers and it became the Roman capital of Gaul. It was the central hub of all the Roman roads built in Gaul.

## **Evangelisation of Gaul**

When the gospel came to Gaul, these two places were prominent Christian centres. The first bishop of the church in Lyon was Pothinus, a native of Asia Minor. Possibly he and his more famous successor Irenaeus (c130-202AD) were part of a missionary team from Asia Minor. It is generally recognised that when Irenaeus was a boy, he learnt the gospel from Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna (present-day Izmir in Turkey) who had been a disciple of the apostle John. Irenaeus wrote, 'I can tell the very place in which the blessed Polycarp used to sit when he preached his sermons, where he came in and went out, the manner of his life, what he looked like, the sermons he delivered to the people, and how he used to report his association with John and the others who had seen the Lord, how he would relate their words, and the things concerning the Lord he had heard from them, about his miracles, and teachings. Polycarp had received all this from eyewitnesses of the Word of life, and related all these things in accordance with the Scriptures. I listened eagerly to these things at the time, by God's mercy which was bestowed on me, and I made notes of them not on paper, but in my heart, and constantly by the grace of God I meditate on them faithfully.'



Irenaeus was deeply influenced by the godly Polycarp. He was taught the gospel by him, but he was also influenced by the 'manner of life' of the 'blessed' Polycarp. The quality of the churches planted in the south-east of France in the second century reflected that of the church at Smyrna, acknowledged by Christ in Revelation as being spiritually rich, yet marked out for suffering. Polycarp himself died as a martyr in AD 156. When the Roman governor of this busy, bustling city, one of the foremost in Asia Minor, demanded that Polycarp 'renounce Christ', the gentle, aged Polycarp replied, 'For 86 years I have been his servant and he has never done me any wrong. How can I blaspheme my King and Saviour?' He was condemned to be burnt to death. Polycarp was then tied to a stake and a fire was lit around him. Shortly afterwards a soldier was ordered to stab him to death. Many of the believers in France were to follow the same path.

In AD177 Pothinus sent Irenaeus on a mission to Rome. Some time earlier in that decade Irenaeus had been set apart as an elder in Lyon. At the time the Roman emperor was Marcus Aurelius. Christians infuriated this Stoic emperor because they had 'more peace than that of his Stoic mentors'. The rabid Aurelius crucified Christians along the roadsides through the Roman Empire. On one occasion he surrounded his palace garden with crucified Christians and set them on fire to light the garden at night. The storm of persecution struck in Lyon whilst Irenaeus was away and Pothinus was martyred in Lyon. When Irenaeus returned to Lyon he was made the second bishop of Lyon. He continued to pastor the church there until some time during the first decade of the third century.

### **Persecution of Believers in Gaul by Romans**

Believers in Vienne were subject to the fury of its Roman governor, soldiers and an angry crowd. Among those to suffer were Attalus, a pillar of his native church in Pergamon (Asia Minor), Sanctus (a deacon in the church in Vienne) and the recently baptised Maturus. A slave girl, Blandina, was particularly badly treated. She was tortured and subjected to a succession of severe treatments from morning to night. A witness spoke of her mangled body and gaping wounds. Despite the exhausted efforts of her evil tormentors she grew in faith and found refreshment, rest and indifference to her sufferings as she continued to profess her faith in Christ. The frustrated cruel persecutors then tied her up and put her in an enclosed arena with wild animals but as these beasts refused to touch her she was returned to her prison. On the last day of these 'sports' she was brought out again in front of the mob with a boy aged



about 15. The two of them were subject to more beatings in front of the crowd as they were urged to pray to pagan gods. Eventually the two of them passed into their Master's presence. Blandina was probably dead before they threw her body in front of a bull that was encouraged to gore her body.

Sometimes Christians are accused of being weak people, but the early Christians in France were made of steel. In many ways this was a characteristic of French Christians in the generations to come.

This was the Gaul that Irenaeus returned to and in which he served the Lord. Surprisingly in view of the violence it seemed that he died a 'natural death'. He did not have an untroubled time as bishop of Lyon. He had to contend for the faith against heretics who were troubling the church.

### **Irenaeus and Gnostics**

Irenaeus grew up in Smyrna alongside a man called Florinus. This man renounced his orthodox Christian faith and followed Valentinus a leader of one of the Gnostic sects. In his book *Against Heresies. A Refutation and Overthrow of Knowledge Falsely So-called*, and a smaller book called *Proof of the Apostolic Teaching* Irenaeus demonstrated his careful study of the different Gnostic sects. He drew upon most of the books of the New Testament with the exception of Hebrews, James, 2 Peter and Jude. (His use of these New Testament documents is important in that it shows that the second-century church looked on them as being authoritative.)

Although he gave detailed descriptions of the various Gnostic sects, he concentrated his attention on the followers of Valentinus. (Possibly this was because of his association with Valentinus in his youth, but Marcion, brought up as the son of a bishop in Sinope elsewhere in Asia Minor, was much more influential in fact<sup>1</sup>.) In describing these sects Irenaeus demonstrated that their beliefs were ridiculous and not worthy of faith being placed in them. The Gnostics claimed that they had a special but secret knowledge passed on from Jesus and the apostles. Essentially they said that Jesus had two doctrines. One of these was fit for the common man. This was taught to everyone. A more advanced doctrine was kept secret from the multitudes and was reserved for the spiritual elite. However, Irenaeus argued that none of the churches that the apostles founded or ministered in taught this secret knowledge. They all had the same gospel and this contradicted Gnostic beliefs. It was unreasonable to think that the apostles should remain silent about a 'secret teaching' in the

churches they were actually associated with. Unfortunately this argument did suffer from the serious drawback that it was eventually twisted to suggest that true churches followed an apostolic succession rather than apostolic doctrine.

However, he also argued from the Bible that the God who created the universe is the same as the God of both Old and New Testaments and that he is the heavenly Father of Jesus Christ. The Gnostics taught that the creator of the physical universe is the 'Demiurge' and that he created an evil product rather than a good creation. Irenaeus maintained that Christ really took flesh, becoming a real man who really died and rose again. He taught that Christ is the Second Adam, who by his perfect obedience reversed and cancelled the disobedience of the first Adam.

Irenaeus associated amoralism with at least some of the Gnostic sects. Amoralists argue that there is no such thing as absolute moral truths as opposed to immoralism where moral principles are opposed and not accepted. Valentinus wrote that Simon Magus, a prototype Gnostic, founded the school of moral freedom. Simon argued that those that trusted him and his consort Helen should not be troubled by biblical prophets and their moral exhortations and are 'free to do what they wish'. Irenaeus argued that the Valentinians were the followers of Simon. They were lax in their dietary habits, eating food that was sacrificed to idols and sexually promiscuous, taking wives and living with them as 'adopted sisters'. The teaching of Valentinus has a strangely modern ring in that he allowed women to be ordained in his communities.

Irenaeus also accused another Gnostic sect of being amoral. He accused the Carpocratians of being 'so abandoned in their recklessness that they claim to have in their power and be able to practise anything whatsoever that is ungodly (irreligious) and impious... they say that conduct is only good or evil in the eyes of man.' The Gnostics in denying the Christian God of the Old and New Testaments were left without a basis for morality. There is an interesting parallel between the Demiurge and Mother Nature or evolution for that matter.

The Gnostic controversy produced a clear reaction in the apostolic churches. These all had a similar rule of faith, which was a summary of the apostles' teaching. In the West this rule of faith eventually became formulated as the Apostles' Creed, 'I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth...'

Although there were several churches in the eastern part of the Roman Empire that claimed direct association with the apostles, there was only one in the

West. In the early days of the Church the Roman Church was remarkably orthodox. In Irenaeus' time the Church of Rome was merely the first among equals and enjoyed particular respect from the other churches.

The Gnostic controversy led to a deep concern that the writings of the apostles should be preserved. The determining factor as to which Scriptures should be accepted as being authoritative was that either the apostles themselves or those under the direction of the apostles wrote the documents. Paul, John, Peter and Matthew were accepted as being true and having authority. Likewise Mark who wrote under Peter's direction and Luke who was directed by Paul were included. The controversy with the Gnostics provided an impulse to formulate the canon of the New Testament.

The churches that subscribed to the Apostles' teaching became known as the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church set itself apart from the various Gnostic churches that had no such unified doctrine. The Catholic Church taught the same doctrines everywhere it was found throughout the world and emphasised orthodoxy, unity, controlled church organisation and discipline in line with the apostolic doctrines. Roman Catholicism developed over the succeeding centuries. This latter body rejected the doctrines of the Reformation that were widely rediscovered in the sixteenth century.

Irenaeus vigorously opposed Gnosticism in all its forms and contended for the faith taught by the apostles, but he also did all he could in order to maintain spiritual unity with those who were of the same mind on the essentials of the faith. He was particularly exercised as to what was the correct response to another group of teachers in the Catholic Church at the time.

### **Irenaeus and the Montanists**

Montanus was a convert to Christianity and lived in the region of Phrygia in Asia Minor. Round about AD170 he started to prophesy as a young convert. Two prophetesses, Priscilla and Maximilla, also joined him in asserting that the Holy Spirit was speaking in a new way through them, basing their doctrine on John 14:16 and 16:12-13. Their main message was that the second coming of Christ was imminent. They had a very demanding moral code. This included a total ban on second marriages. They held frequent fastings, special diets and taught that virgins should be veiled. They taught that Christians should embrace martyrdom, never seeking to avoid persecution and that there was no forgiveness for serious sins committed after baptism. Montanists boasted of visions, speaking in tongues, prophetic utterances and other

supernatural gifts. Montanism spread widely into Italy, North Africa and France and gained support from Tertullian (c160-220 AD). However, many leading Christian teachers opposed this movement including Clement of Alexandria and the bishops of Hierapolis and Antioch. The bishops of Asia Minor met in a series of meetings and the outcome was that all Montanists were excommunicated in this region. Irenaeus could not ignore it but advised Bishop Eleutherus of Rome (AD182-89) against excommunicating those who followed their teaching. Instead he urged gentleness towards them. The bishop of Rome was unmoved by this plea for toleration. The Montanists went their own way and survived into the sixth century.

Although Irenaeus did not seem to oppose these charismatic gifts, it would seem that they were not present in his congregation and he said, 'We hear of many members of the Church who have prophetic gifts, speak by the Spirit in all kinds of tongues, bring men's secret thought to light for their own good, and expound the mysteries of God.' It was strange that this leading Christian teacher, who was so valiant for truth, was unable to speak first-hand of present experience of these gifts. Eusebius of Caesarea (263-339AD) was cautious in commenting on the written words of Irenaeus about 'manifestations of divine and miraculous power continuing in some of the churches'. B B Warfield, arguing that the 'charismatic gifts' died out with the apostolic age, pointed out that Irenaeus did not give specific instances of these miracles in the second century and that his youth 'bordered on the Johannean age'.

Origen of Alexandria (185-254 AD) referred to these supernatural gifts and stated, 'There were signs of the Holy Spirit at the beginning of Christ's teaching. Immediately after he ascended into heaven, he showed forth more of these signs; but afterwards there were not so many. Still, even now there are traces of them among a few who have had their souls purified by the gospel.'

In assessing the value of Irenaeus' writings on miraculous signs, it is important to note that neither he nor his church had actually experienced them first-hand. It is also important to realise that his writings are not part of the canon of Scripture. He and the others might still have in mind the miracles associated with the recent apostolic age. The purpose of the apostolic gifts was clearly to give authority to the apostolic doctrine which was the faith given once for all to the Church. Caution is required in the interpretation of his comments in this area.

B B Warfield helpfully referred to the work of Bishop Kaye. The latter observed that the power of working miracles was limited to the apostles and

those disciples upon whom the apostles conferred it by the imposition of hands. As these disciples died out, these gifts also died out. The last of these disciples would have died by the middle of the second century. However, proof would have been given to the world that the gospel is God's unique revelation to the world. Bishop Kaye's explanation fits the historical evidence given by Irenaeus. Sadly, Irenaeus merely reported what he had heard and did not attempt to explain the things that he had heard.

The emergence of the Montanists was a problem to Irenaeus and the Catholic Church at the time. The Montanist movement has similarities to the Charismatic movement of today but few supporters of the Charismatic movement would adopt the severe restrictions on lifestyle that the Montanists insisted upon. Both movements have led to sharp differences of opinion and divisions within the Church. Irenaeus was cautious in his assessment of the movement in his day and was catholic-spirited towards those that he saw as being Christian brethren. He was totally forthright in his denunciation of the Gnostic movement as it was clearly condemned by Scripture and completely undermines the gospel. The balance of the use of his energy and time is a lesson to us today. In his mind the greatest enemy was the Gnostic movement and he directed his fire power in that direction.

Charismatics make an appeal to Irenaeus and his possible acceptance of charismatic gifts in the second century. Roman Catholics might well appeal to the teaching of Irenaeus in connection with the veneration of Mary. Just as Paul compared the first man Adam with Jesus Christ the second man, Irenaeus compared the life of Eve with Mary. He wrote, 'Just as the human race fell into bondage to death through a virgin, so it is rescued by a virgin; the disobedience of a virgin has been balanced in the opposite scale by a virgin's obedience.' Sadly, the great Irenaeus, who appealed to the Scriptures appeared to go beyond the Scriptures and elevate Mary in a way that the Scriptures do not. His enthusiasm for the faithful life of Mary provided a foundation for future generations of Roman Catholics to build up a huge edifice of Mary worship. It is a lesson for us not to let our imagination build up unbiblical doctrines rather than be submissive to scriptural teaching alone.

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<sup>1</sup> Marcion taught that the Old and New Testaments were in opposition to each other and his 'New Testament' omitted any Jewish elements. He was only willing to accept some of Paul's writings and Luke's Gospel. Like other Gnostics he taught that the physical world was evil and was hostile towards sex and marriage. His sect lasted until the sixth century.

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## African Pastors' Conference

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**S** EVEN APCS TOOK PLACE IN JANUARY. Lawrence Lama and Kennedy Sunkutu of Zambia, and Irving Steggles followed the theme of how to preach Christ from the Old Testament. Raymond Zulu based his materials on the Sermon on the Mount, while Clinton Stone took 'The problem of free will' as his subject. Mike Marsland acted as overall organiser and also took charge of the books. When called on he was also available to expound the Scriptures.

Zionism is a major movement in South Africa. A convert from Zionism is now a fervent supporter of the APC ministry. The spirit of unity was especially strong at Port Edward. The Newcastle APC attended by 50 received generous support from the Newcastle Baptist Church. Translation into Zulu is a feature at this conference and pastor Wilson gave himself tirelessly to this role. A further encouragement was the increased number at the second APC in Soweto. At the first one the resident pastors were cautious not knowing the nature of this enterprise. The preachers and the books testify to the purpose.

A total of 2,848 books were sold or given away to which must be added those at Port Elizabeth (we are waiting for a report from Siphwe who is in charge of the books there).

Port Elizabeth is the only place where there was difficulty with the postal authorities wanting to charge heavy duties.

The new pastor of the Welkom Baptist Church has organised four workshops as a follow-up to make the best use of APC literature.

The most important issues for prayer are:

1. That more leaders will emerge who follow up in the way just described.
2. That in every conference there will be reliable organisers who will advertise the APCs and use brochures to invite pastors to attend.
3. That an APC will be established in Tembisa which is situated between Pretoria and Johannesburg. With possibly six million, Tembisa is believed to be the largest township-cum-shanty town in South Africa.
4. That the APC work will maximise effectiveness in establishing solid reformed theological foundations resulting in better pastor/preachers.
5. That wisdom will be given to the leaders in responding to urgent requests to establish APCs in Malawi and other southern African countries.
6. That an early start will be made in organising future conferences.



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## What do we teach new converts?

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*Peter Stead*

**T**HERE ARE VARIOUS COURSES USED EVANGELISTICALLY to begin to teach people about their need of Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. For some that is as far as it goes, and they fade from the scene, but for others the Lord moves through his Spirit to convict of sin and to bring them to saving faith in Jesus Christ. Do you remember being a new convert? As a new-born babe in Christ, irrespective of your years, needing to be taught and nurtured so that you grew in the faith. How was it for you at that stage?



*Peter Stead*

### *The new converts*

As an example I take a husband and wife who have been attending church services for a number of months now. Time has been spent with them in answering their questions about the Christian faith. They have never actually professed faith in Christ, but they appreciate the sermons and love attending the church. Most of all, one notices a developing spirituality in them. We must take it further with them to discern their faith in order for them to help them advance. For them to progress they need to know and understand what they believe. Explanation is needed to meet their needs.

They have asked questions about the Bible, the Godhead, sin, different aspects of Christ and the nature of the church. So then as 'new converts' we seek to establish them in the faith. What can I use so that my friends can have something to take home to read and study? A few years ago Erroll Hulse recommended a book *Be sure. what you believe* by Joe Nesom (EP) for teaching new converts the basics of the Christian faith. So for twenty sessions I met with this couple. We read each chapter together concluding by answering the questions set for discussion. This proved to be very helpful to them. It brought out their own questions on matters they found difficult to grasp this leading to further discussion and explanation. Whilst they were not coming into membership at that point, these studies proved them to be genuine converts. The teaching in that book was very beneficial.

Another useful book which can be used in a similar way is *God's Riches - workbook on the Doctrines of Grace* by John Benton and John Peet. This is more detailed than Nesom's book and is more demanding. It is a helpful workbook.

So why are these personal studies necessary? Those new to the faith are vulnerable. Young plants need to be cultivated. Satan will do his utmost to confuse those who are new to the faith. He wants them to fall away. He will use any means to achieve that. He is the enemy of souls. So he will aim to influence them through professing Christians who do not believe the Bible, who object to the preaching of the cross and who prefer anecdotal moralistic preaching.

Remember, as elders, that our responsibility to the Chief Shepherd is to shepherd his flock. The work requires patience and love. Pastors are motivated in their labours out of love for Jesus who gave himself for us. True pastors will pray for and care for the sheep. They will persevere.

### *Baptism and preparation for church membership*

The couple I have described have settled in the church and now want to be more involved. They now express a desire to be baptised. In the churches I have served believer's baptism is an ordinance essential for church membership.

### *Baptism*

We want new members to understand why we hold to baptism by immersion rather than infant baptism, as it is quite possible they have been christened as babies. They may say, 'we know you don't do christening, but baptise believers, and we wish to be baptised.' Even so, we need to make sure they *do* have a proper understanding of the ordinance, so classes will be held to prepare them for baptism.

The important aspect for one going through believer's baptism is that the candidates give their testimony of conversion by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. They are forgiven sinners, redeemed by Christ and adopted into God's family. Baptism symbolises union with Christ in his death, burial and resurrection (Rom 6:1-5). This truth leads to membership with the body that forms the local church.

### *Church Membership*

Baptism and church membership go together so new converts need to be prepared to be responsible members of the church. To the couple already





*This is a view of the Roman Theatre in Vienne, taken from a hill overlooking the town. In its day it could hold 13,000 people. Could this have been the place where Blandina was tortured and put to death? See page 22*

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described another couple who have been baptised by immersion have settled in the church and are requesting membership. We use our church constitution which outlines what we believe as well as the responsibilities of church members. We need always to remember that the future belongs to the new converts and the younger members of the church. Eventually upon them will come the responsibility to take the church forward into the future. They need to be fully equipped with a knowledge of what that involves. Our earnest desire is for the church to be built on Jesus Christ and we want the church to be a sound working structure for the days ahead. So we need to go through the church constitution and look in detail at the articles of faith and church practice. Our prospective members need to be aware of these important matters.

### *Church Constitution*

To be a member of the church is a great privilege and when one becomes a church member we are brothers and sisters in Christ in unity in a body of believers of which Christ is the Head. Membership, therefore, is a worthy and earnest responsibility for a Christian. The church constitution explains these issues. Whatever their age, or first language, we must do our best to ensure these brothers and sisters grasp the nature of their practical responsibilities. We do this over six sessions.

The Articles of Faith of our church are based on the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith. (See article, *How to use the 1689 Confession*, RT 235). New

members need to be aware of the doctrinal position of the church. The summary of faith enables this to be understood. This summary may consist of eight to twelve subjects (e.g. God, Christ, Holy Spirit etc). Throughout we show that the truths expressed are based firmly on the Scriptures. Some churches have a church covenant expressing their unity. They renew this together as a body round the Lord's Table annually. In this way commitment to the Lord and to one another is expressed.

Going through the pages on Church Practice identifies to new members the importance and privilege of church membership. Procedures for dealing with issues of church discipline, the roles of elders and deacons (their appointing and leaving), the meetings of the church, prayer and members' meetings, are outlined and discussed with prospective members. These subjects are based upon the Scriptures.

All this underlines the importance of church membership. We are not a sports club or a secular club. We are a body of believers. Christ loved the Church. He gave himself up for her by the washing with water through the word, to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless (Eph 5:25-27). Thus we seek to provide foundations for new members. We seek to reflect our Lord's love for his Church in the way we care for the members - new or long-established. There is no harm in a church reviewing the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith either in Bible Study sessions or by way of a series of teaching sermons. When needed a church can re-visit its constitution. It will enable the members to appreciate their privileges.

It is also necessary to make it known that there are Trust Deeds for the church. The church officers are responsible to maintain the articles of the Trust Deeds.

### *Closing thoughts*

Even though I have followed these methods throughout my time in the ministry there have been occasions when they seem to have failed. I am fallible and perhaps I have not been as gentle, gracious and loving as I should have been. But I commit my shepherding to the Lord and seek forgiveness for my failings.

There are some who start with joy but who do not persevere but fall away. The parable of the sower warns us that there are different kinds of hearers and different kinds of response. I am deeply thankful for those who have given me great joy as they have matured in the faith.

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## Covenant Theology at the Carey Conference

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**S**AM WALDRON WAS THE MAIN SPEAKER at the Carey Conference. His theme was 'New Covenant Ministry' based on Jeremiah 31:31-34. He examined the subject in three parts: 'The Necessity of the Law in the New Covenant', 'The Centrality of Grace' and the 'Universality of the Spirit'. He introduced the first paper by stressing that the New Covenant is the 'constitution of the church'. He then identified the law which is written on the heart as the Decalogue; that 'on the heart' means that God installs his law as the ruling power of our thoughts and affections; and the reason he does this is that it is his purpose to have a law-abiding, holy people. He concluded by affirming the classic three uses of the law and the threefold division of the law. Nor, he added, does the in-writing of the law mean we do not need an objective written Word. Conversion is accompanied by a heartfelt delight in God's law.

The second paper focused on the sovereign determination of grace; the unbreakable character of the new covenant – the old covenant was broken (Heb 8:6-8); and its mediatorial guarantee was Christ the surety of a better covenant. We were exhorted to preach grace and rejoice in Calvinistic distinctives, given the deficiencies of Arminianism which he exposed one by one.

Thirdly in 'The Universality of the Spirit', Sam Waldron looked at the dissimilarity of the new covenant –

we must take the 'not like' of Jeremiah 31 seriously. He looked at the precise superiority of the new covenant. Was it quantitative as some Paedobaptists teach? Rather, it is the



*Mostyn Roberts*

fact that all the members of the covenant will infallibly be saved. They will have the law written on their heart, they will all know the Lord and they will be forgiven. (Greg Nicholls – see below – calls these the moral, experiential and legal aspects to the new covenant) and this covenant cannot be broken. The distinction is not to be found in personal spiritual experience, but in the truth that this covenant is spiritual and unbreakable; its newness is to be seen in its corporate perfection more than in any difference between the spiritual experience of saints in the different dispensations.

Finally its ultimate fulfilment is in the new creation but it is inaugurated in the church. The nature of the new covenant means that, **1.** We must insist on the importance of a regenerate church membership (so far as humanly possible). **2.** We must insist on the biblical necessity of believer's baptism as the rite of initiation. The new covenant is not a physical covenant and the rite of admission must reflect that. **3.** The fatal flaw of Paedobaptists is to

argue for the similarity of the covenants and not see sufficiently the differences (and Paedobaptists differ as to whether children are presumptively regenerate or not regenerate at all). 4. The new covenant is consummated in the new creation. 5. Remember the glory and blessing of church membership – an authentic and genuine church membership is an anticipation of the heavenly state, of the heavenly Jerusalem. Our model for church is not looking back to the mixed multitude of Israel, but looking forward to the pure Church of the *eschaton*, the new Jerusalem.

Martin Slater of Bedford also gave a clear and helpful summary of covenant theology from a Baptist perspective. Bill James looked at the place of children in a Baptist fellowship. On different themes, John Benton gave a clear survey of present culture under the headings of demography, psychology and theology; Lewis Allen told us about the Lord's blessing on the church plant in Huddersfield; and Matthias Lohmann of Munich gave a biographical sketch of Johann Oncken, a German Baptist pioneer. There was also an unusually helpful Q&A session.

I mentioned above Greg Nicholls, whose book *Covenant Theology, a Reformed and Baptist Perspective* (Solid Ground, 2011) I have just finished reading. It was interesting to interweave what he says with what I heard at the conference. Nichols is very helpful, insisting that the superiority of the new covenant is that its promises are unconditional, guaranteed and spiritual – coming to much the same conclusion as Waldron, from a slightly

different angle. 'The covenant of grace views [partakers of the covenant] as individuals to whom God applies redemption with the gospel. The new covenant views them as an



Dr Sam Waldron

organised community formed by Jesus in history.' I am not sure if it is necessary to individualise the covenant of grace in that way, but it is significant again to see the collective, corporate, nature of the new covenant emphasised. Nicholls too is quite clear that the Decalogue is written on the heart of the believer in the new covenant.

I came away from this conference encouraged as a Calvinist; as a Baptist; and as a 1689 Baptist – it did seem as if the Carey Conference were trying to pin its colours to the mast on the new covenant theology issue. After the Q&A session the chairman said that he could hear the nails in the coffin of NCT; I am not so sure, as error is tenacious but for whatever reason, its voice was not heard above a squeak at this conference. Erroll Hulse insisted that we are not going to accept any tinkering with the 1689 (meaning presumably no asserting an ambivalent position on the law, as the 1644 Confession is supposed to do). Above all I came home glad to be a Christian with such wonderful covenant blessings assured me through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Mostyn Roberts

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## Covenant Theology – a review article

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*This article is by Dr Robert Oliver*

Greg Nicholls, *Covenant Theology: A Reformed and Baptist Perspective on God's Covenants*, Solid Ground Christian Books, Birmingham, Alabama, USA, 366 pp. hardback, from publishers \$22.50, (list price \$35).

To what extent is Covenant Theology basic to your understanding of Scripture or indeed a dynamic in your Christian life? It was a subject frequently referred to in the sermons and hymns of the chapel of my childhood and adolescence, but never fully explored as a grand theme overarching the entirety of Biblical revelation. I later encountered Paedobaptists who claimed that their theology alone did justice to the covenant of grace, but their treatment of the subject seemed inadequate when measured against the Biblical statement of the new covenant. However, much Baptist discussion of the theme also faltered, because it seemed to drive a wedge between the Old and New Testaments.

At last we have a work which explores the subject historically and also attempts to deal with the Biblical evidence, giving us both Biblical and systematic theology. I have read Greg Nicholls' work with mounting excitement. He presents a doctrine in which there is one chief character and hero, Christ the Redeemer, the seed of the woman who bruises the serpent's head. God creates a covenantal framework which progressively reveals Christ. This framework is established in



*Dr Robert Oliver*

three great deliverances: through Noah, Moses and Christ and in each case a covenant community is established. In the context of each of these covenant communities God intervenes, choosing a righteous servant through whom he will establish the community. God's 'covenants are symphonious, not atomistic'; each new development flows out of the previous.

'There are two redemptions of God's people, two divine covenants with them, and two Testaments of Scripture. Yet there are not two peoples of God, but one; not two Bibles but one; not two redemptions from sin, but one; not two ways of salvation but one, by grace by faith in Christ. God divided the Bible not into seven parts, but two. Each Testament corresponds to a redemptive act of God and the community that



experienced it ... These stark facts trumpet the importance of divine covenants for understanding the person and work of Christ, the identity of the Christian Church, and the relevance of the whole Bible' p. 122.

Sadly many Baptists today appear to have an aversion to Covenant Theology. Some have been influenced by Dispensational Theology which speaks of God's covenants but sees little organic unity between them. Others reacting against Dispensationalists have also rejected Reformed thinking on this subject, perhaps even suspecting that Baptists who show an interest in it are crypto-Presbyterians or at least suspect in their adherence to believer's baptism.

A little knowledge of Baptist Church history should clear up the latter misapprehension. The 1689 Confession has a chapter on God's Covenant, which is close to that in the Westminster Confession, although it omits reference to the covenant of works. On the other hand it was alert to some Puritan thinking on the subject which is not found in the Westminster statement. The Baptist Catechism of 1694 teaches both the covenant of works and that of grace. John Gill preached on these themes as did Benjamin Beddome who published a commentary on the Baptist Catechism in 1752. Spurgeon delighted to tell of the time when he was a school master in Newmarket and was tutored in the covenant of grace by an old cook. His convictions were made plain in his republication of the 1689 Confession in the 1850s and perhaps with even greater clarity in his Catechism which appeared in 1864.

More recently some friends have been confused by the emergence of what has become known as 'New Covenant theology'. What was needed was a full Biblical and theological exposition of this subject. This has now appeared in Greg Nicholls' work, *Covenant Theology*.

Part 1, The Reformed Theology of God's Covenants.

Part 2, A Biblical Exposition of God's Covenants.

Some readers may prefer to move straight to Part 2, where Nicholls meticulously reviews the Biblical evidence and proceeds to a lucid Biblical doctrine which integrates with the outworking of salvation. Personally I found it good to begin with the first section which helps us to understand our predecessors as we see how they wrestled with this great corpus of Biblical teaching and sought to present it in an organised way.

Chapter 1 compares the treatment of the doctrine of the Covenant in the Westminster and London Confessions. After paying tribute to the foundational work of the Westminster Divines, Nicholls gives careful attention to the work of the Baptist revisers of the 1670s whose work appeared first in 1677. This gained general acceptance in 1689. Differences are noted and discussed. He is not uncritical of these early attempts to define the concept of covenant, but recognises that so vast a subject has challenged both Baptist and Paedobaptist theologians over the years. The founding fathers are recognised as significant pioneers. There is significant agreement between the two Confessions, although the

Baptists omit reference to the covenant of works in their chapter on the covenant, but it reappears in their Catechism in 1694. Another significant difference is that the Baptists assert that the temporal 'covenant of grace is rooted in an eternal "covenant transaction", between the Father and the Son', not explicitly mentioned in the Westminster Confession p. 15.

Chapter 2 discusses the contribution of John Gill. Gill pays careful attention to Biblical usage of the term covenant, emphasising the eternal establishment of the covenant of grace. Reviewing covenants made by Abraham and his neighbours, Isaac and Abimelech, and David and Jonathan, he saw these as proper covenants between men, but proceeded to the conclusion that to use the term covenant to describe an arrangement between God and man is inappropriate. Thus he identifies the covenant of redemption with the covenant of grace, which he sees as being administered in successive revelations. Discussing the latter point, Nicholls considers that Gill 'does superb Biblical theology' p.27. However, he considers that Gill goes too far in his systematic theology, because he 'insists on one divine covenant, whereas Scripture speaks of a plurality of divine covenants with men. Yet in spite of one structural flaw in his theology, Gill has made valuable contributions of momentous significance to the Reformed doctrine of divine covenant' p. 28.

Chapter 3 proceeds to the work of Charles Hodge, whose broad and comprehensive survey encompassed historical and Biblical treatment of the subject. He emphasised that in all ages the people of God constituted a church

over against the teaching of those Anabaptists who denied that the people of God were a church before the advent of Christ and against Romanists who denied that the salvation of the people of God who died before Christ entered the presence of God at that point p.44. He concludes that 'Dr Hodge has furnished the Church of Christ with a thorough, helpful, and careful treatment of this subject. We should appreciate and admire the many contributions he has made to our understanding of God's mind on this matter' p.45.

Chapter 4 considers the conclusions of Robert Lewis Dabney, who 'distinguishes between [the] eternal covenant and the historical gospel promise that he dubs the covenant of grace. His covenant theology rests on this crucial distinction' p.50. Adopting the definition of a covenant as 'a free and optional compact between two equals', he can write: 'The Covenant of Redemption between the Father and the Son, I hold to be the real covenant transaction.' Dabney's assertions lead him to a severe criticism of his fellow-Presbyterian, John Dick, for failing to distinguish between the Covenant of Redemption and the Covenant of Grace. Dabney seems to use different definitions of the term 'covenant' in his treatment. This is criticised by Nicholls who says that Dabney saw the importance of the covenant of redemption but was hampered by his definition of a covenant as a contract. Nicholls offers this solution of the dispute:

'A divine pledge does not have to be an "optional contract between equals" in order to be a "real" covenant. Therefore there is no need for him to demote the covenant of grace to the rank of "so-

called" covenant. If a real divine covenant is "an optional compact between two equals", then neither the Messianic covenant with the God-man Jesus, nor the covenant of grace with God's elect in Christ is a true covenant. Dabney, to some degree has fallen into Gill's trap p.52'.

Nicholls acknowledges the value of Dabney's work, especially his grasp of the unfolding plan of Biblical theology. In this respect he 'follows and develops the lead of the Baptist fathers' (LCF 7: 3) p.59, a compliment that Dabney might not have appreciated.

In chapter 5 there is a consideration of the Dutch Calvinists, notably Herman Bavinck and Louis Berkhof. These teachers cannot be studied without some attention to the *Belgic Confession* and the *Heidelberg Catechism*, doctrinal standards of Dutch Calvinism. In these two statements the teaching is implicit rather than explicit. The *Belgic Confession* does use the doctrine polemically to defend infant baptism. Nicholls defends the continental theologians against the charge sometimes made by Baptists that they invented covenant doctrine only to defend the traditional practice of infant baptism. This accusation he declares to be 'uncharitable' and 'untrue' p. 65.

There is more detail in the Canons of Dort where the concern seems to move from the polemic to the pastoral.

Against this confessional background Bavinck and Berkhof are considered. Nicholls points out that Bavinck's teaching on the covenant is clear but is expounded under the heading of anthropology, which made it

'vulnerable to a man-centred theology' p.77. Berkhof does not try to link the gospel call to the covenant as in the Westminster tradition, but does have difficulty in linking the particularism of the covenant of redemption with the inclusion of the seed of believers in the covenant of grace. He speaks of two points of view which have to be used in treatment of this challenge. One is to see the covenant of grace as a purely legal relationship and the other is to see it as a communion of life. In the case of adults, 'unless their profession be false entrance into the covenant as a legal relationship and into the covenant as a communion of life coincide' p.80. Children are included in the expectation that the legal relationship will in time become a living reality. In the Dutch tradition Berkhof places great emphasis on the nurture of the children of believers. Nicholls faces this challenge, which he considers 'entangles Berkhof in the inescapable dilemma of universalism' p.81.

Nicholls urges Baptists to ensure that 'our presentation of the covenant of grace should address this instrumental role of parental nurture and of the general gospel call' p.82.

After a useful summary of the historical treatment of this subject in chapter 6, Nicholls proceeds to a review of Contemporary Modifications in chapter 7. This is a most helpful overview and a reminder that theological study is continuing among men who are committed to the doctrinal standards. The classic confessions of the seventeenth century do not provide a complete definition of God's covenant nor do they trace the Biblical development of the successive covenants with men. These issues have



been addressed more recently by men faithful to the Biblical testimony and the teaching of the confessions.

Gill, Dabney and Berkhof saw the essence of the covenant as an agreement between two parties and each found it difficult to do justice to the wealth of Biblical evidence. More recently O Palmer Robertson, Meredith Kline and John Murray all addressed this issue. Nicholls welcomes the work of each of these servants of the Lord, but especially commends John Murray's definition of a divine covenant 'as "sworn fidelity" rather than "mutual contract"' p.96.

Morton Smith, while accepting the expression 'covenant of grace' as an overall description, points out that this must not obscure the fact that within this category, 'the Bible presents a series of covenants that may be described as gracious in character' p.97. Smith identifies six culminating in the New Covenant, but to these Nicholls adds a seventh, 'the Messianic, ratified with Christ upon his session and coronation (Heb 7: 21, 28) p.97.

A weakness in the Baptist Confession is its retreat from an association between the Covenant of Grace and Baptism and the Lord's Supper. This may be a reaction against Paedobaptist confusion. Strangely, however, none of the historic Confessions appeals to our Lord's reference to the New Covenant at the institution of his Supper. Nicholls points out that Paul Jewett, David Kingdon, Fred Malone and Sam Waldron have all addressed this issue. These brethren have all demonstrated that 'only genuine believers, who partake in the covenant of grace should

partake in those covenant symbols', (Baptism and the Lord's Supper) p.99.

In successive chapters in part 2 the teaching of the Bible on the following covenants is examined: the Noahic, the Abrahamic, the Mosaic or Old Covenant, the Davidic, the New Covenant and the Messianic. Each of these chapters needs to be studied with care. This review will not examine each of these expositions in detail, but draw attention to two important chapters presenting an overview.

Greg Nicholls tells us that different approaches and expositions from sound men confused him for a long time. He therefore carefully studied every reference to the word 'covenant' and the verbs associated with these. These he lists so that the reader can do his own research at leisure. His conclusion is that a divine covenant is God's sworn fidelity to his covenant people. The unfolding of this is a 'wonderful story of divine love and faithfulness displayed in divine covenants' p.106.

Having surveyed the Biblical evidence in outline, Nicholls is ready to treat his subject theologically. This he does in chapter 9, 'The Covenant of Grace'. He agrees with the statement of the *1689 Confession*, which declares: 'This covenant is revealed in the gospel; first of all to Adam in the promise of salvation by the seed of the woman'. He then considers the foundation, features and fulfilment of the covenant of grace. In his discussion of the features, he identifies the partakers of the covenant as all the elect redeemed by Jesus Christ. He writes, 'This comports with the Larger Catechism: "The covenant of grace was made with Christ as the second Adam, and in him

with all the elect as his seed.” Christ’s children are patently not his physical children, but his spiritual seed’ p.128. The covenant is fulfilled by the gospel and so he moves to a discussion of the general call and the effectual call, which must always be considered together. The permanent means of grace are preachers, parents and prayer and these have been used under both the old and new covenant administrations. There are in addition diverse means of grace applicable to the separate administrations of the old and new covenants.

Nicholls’ treatment of ‘the remarkable form of the covenant of grace’ and ‘the functions of the covenant of grace’ is glorious and must be studied in depth, pp.134 -143. The whole book is leading up to this point. He shows how the remnant of Israel in every generation enjoyed the blessings of the New Covenant and then ‘when Christ appears he gathers this “invisible” society of Abraham’s spiritual children into a “visible” body of believers’.

‘He makes the new covenant with them, and gives them their own ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Then he incorporates Gentile believers into that same society and transforms his people into Christian Israel. The distinguishing trait of this new covenant community is that God has applied redemption to them (1 Thess 1:4,5). Thus the devil’s children have no right to belong to God’s people under the new covenant’ (Matt 18:15 - 18; 1 Cor 5:13). Only Eve’s seed the partakers of the covenant of grace, have that right. Nevertheless, on earth, false disciples still manage to infiltrate this visible

society of the saints (Heb 10: 29). The Lord will end this anomaly when he comes to present his Church to himself in glory without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing (Eph 5: 26, 27).’

The book ends with two useful appendices, 1. ‘The Eternal Counsel of Redemption’, and 2. ‘The Adamic Covenant’. This is an outstanding work which breaks new ground without overturning the work of the great covenant theologians of the past. It integrates the work of those who have gone before. It is well written and yet preserves the lecture format in which these chapters were first delivered. The chapters are of reasonable length and Nicholls has a good clarity of style throughout. Useful diagrams are a help to understanding. The book is beautifully produced.

For Reformed Baptists this work is essential. It shows the organic nature of the covenants and their continuity, making the Old Testament so relevant to us and also shows the discontinuity brought about by the establishment of the greater glories of the new covenant. It should be useful for years to come.

Two small criticisms: the use of the ugly word ‘Baptistic’ in the sub-title. The ‘ic’ at the end of the perfectly adequate adjective Baptist is unnecessary. Try adding it to such titles as Anglican, Methodist or Presbyterian! On a more serious note, a book of this quality will become a book of reference for years to come. It should have at least one index, preferably two or three: of names, subjects and possibly Scripture references.

*Robert W. Oliver*

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