

Editorial

Have you ever given serious consideration to the duty you owe to your fellow Christians in caring for their souls? My calling to be a pastor, a shepherd of the flock of God, binds me to take care of His sheep. Of course, this will happen most within the context of the local congregation who have in a special way called me to be their Pastor. But this visible expression of the flock is in reality only a very small part of an invisible multitude of Christ's blood-bought sheep; and I have a duty to care for every one as He brings our paths to cross. This is in fact true not only for pastors but for all believers. Everyone who has been adopted into the family of God has responsibility towards his brothers and sisters, to care for them.

It should be our great concern to see God honoured in our lives and in the lives of our fellow believers. God will, of course, ultimately be honoured by every situation - He will show His justice and righteousness one day and every soul will acknowledge that He has done all things well. God will be glorified when our actions display a submission to Him and to His Word which acknowledges our belief in His superior wisdom and plan for our lives. But God will also be glorified when our actions are contrary to His ways and will and He deals with us in holy justice. It should be our great passion that God may be glorified through our obedience rather than through our disobedience. But we have a responsibility towards others as well as to ourselves. We have a duty to all whom the Lord brings across our paths and gives us opportunities to influence for good or ill.

There is no place in the life of the believer for turning a blind eye to the sins of others. We may dislike confrontation. We may feel someone else is better equipped to deal with the situation. We may believe it will all pan out in the end. Nevertheless, we have a responsibility before God to care for the souls of our brothers and sisters in the faith.

Here is how Paul puts it: "Brethren, if a man is overtaken in a trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:1-2). James says a similar thing: "Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins" (James 5:19-20).

We are all answerable to God for the words we speak and the actions we take in influencing the lives of others, as well as in the living of our own lives. We must not take that lightly. In speaking on the same issue, but from a different angle, our Lord in His sermon on the mount said: "If you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go

your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift" (Matthew 5:23-24). Surely, Christ is teaching that our worship of God is unacceptable while our hearts bear the burden of unresolved conflict and it is within our power to at least attempt a reconciliation.

Ignoring our own sins or turning our backs on the sins of others never solves anything in the end. It is not easy to do our duty; in a wicked world the right thing is often the most difficult. But if we will submit to God He will help us, and if we will walk in His ways He will bless us, and if we will humble ourselves before Him and others He will exalt us. Our God is merciful and kind - obedience to His Word, though hard at the time, will lead to riches beyond our wildest dreams!

I imagine that we all accept that we have a duty to share the Gospel with unbelievers and call them to trust in Jesus Christ. Most of the articles in this issue recognise this fact and build upon it. However, we must not forget, in the midst of our evangelistic efforts, that God also calls us to care for the souls of our fellow-believers and to ensure that we are living in harmony with them as far as it is within our power. This subject is explored by C. H. Spurgeon in the reprint of his article from 1877 which is still so relevant today.

Boy Meets Girl

by Joshua Harris

Boy meets girl. Now what?

What comes between "How do you do?" and "I do"? How do you find a lifetime partner in a way that's God-centred, not self-centred?

Boy Meets Girl is an honest, romantic, and refreshingly biblical look at relationships. It's about dating with a purpose. About friendship plus possibility. About romance chaperoned by wisdom. Join the guy who "kissed dating goodbye" ...and say hello to courtship.

Joshua Harris, author of the runaway bestseller I Kissed Dating Goodbye (also available from Grace & Truth), has inspired thousands of singles to reexamine their approach to casual dating. Five years after giving up the dating game himself, he met, courted, and married his new bride, Shannon.



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News

The Southern [Reformed] Baptists

Sometimes almost forgotten by their northern counterparts, the southern Reformed Baptist churches struggle against the odds of relative isolation and small size. Yet they have experienced ongoing blessing in their efforts to see the Gospel proclaimed faithfully.

Christchurch

Grace Baptist Church was commenced in 1995 by two families with a vision for a Reformed Baptist witness in the South Island's largest city. Six years on and the Sunday morning attendance has risen to almost 40 and membership to 15. The Church has an influence greater than its size suggests, and enjoys fellowship with other Reformed (Presbyterian) churches in the region.

Evidence of this is the bi-annual day conference with the Evangelical Presbyterian Churches in Christchurch and Ashburton, and Marchwiel Reformed Baptist Church in Timaru. Attendances at these encouraging events have been growing. In addition to this, GBC is involved in *Grace & Truth Family Bible Conferences*, where in 2000 the speaker was Pastor Art Azurdia from California.

Much else has happened in 2000. A Sunday School was commenced and is held before the 10:30am service. About 12-13 children are accommodated in 3 classes, plus an adult study group. It is hoped to invite non-church children this year. A twice-monthly evangelistic study in Rolleston began in November using the *Life Quest* series [see Issue 1 of this magazine]. A Youth Fellowship has begun to provide an informal context in which to witness to the older youth, as well as a forum to cater for their social needs and encouraging friendships within the church.

Some members of the Church are also involved in wider Christian work. The Pastor,

Dafydd Hughes, is active in coordinating the New Zealand Reformed Baptist Churches website at <http://www.rbc.org.nz>, as well as *Grace & Truth Ministries* which includes publishing and literature sales, conferences, youth camps and this magazine (view the web site at <http://www.graceandtruth.rbc.org.nz>). Svetlana Tomkinson has continued with Russian translation work throughout the year, translating letters for various organisations as well as three Children's books for the Roundwood Trust published by Christian Focus Publications. Karen Pollard has recently started work as Secretary for the Christian Heritage Party, while Vic Pollard is the Vice-principal of Middleton Grange, a large Christian school in Christchurch.

*Primary source: the Grace Baptist Church newsletter
- February 2001*

Timaru

Marchwiel Reformed Baptist Church is a Baptist Union church that came to embrace the Doctrines of Grace, formally adopting the 1689 Confession in December 1998. Despite the disadvantage of the distance away from like-minded churches and its small size (about 25-30 attend regularly), they nevertheless have active outreach to the local community. Pamphleting of the neighbourhood to promote a garage sale (which was also a fund raiser for Grace Baptist Missions) and evangelistic bible studies have had limited success, with 2 or 3 interested contacts. A children's "Kid's Club" ministry, as well as a Women's Coffee Hour and Gleenwood retirement home visits are other regular activities aimed at building community relationships and promoting the gospel. Pastor John Leever also has been asked to contribute a series of articles for the *Timaru Herald*, the local newspaper.

The ministry of the Word is the focus at the two Sunday services and a Wednesday night

Bible Study and prayer time. In 2000 Pastor John Leever preached a series from 1 Corinthians and much of Hebrews was also covered. For 2001, he hopes to preach a series based around Spurgeon's Catechism, the aim of which is also to use the Catechism for family devotions during the week.

A bookclub is also running on Sunday afternoons. Ryle's *Holiness* was covered last year. Currently the bookclub is looking at Chantry's *God's Righteous Kingdom*.

*Sourced from Marchuiel newsletter
- January 2001*

Missions News

New Reformed Baptist Work in St Petersburg, Russia

New Zealand is not the only part of the world where there is a need for the truths of God's Sovereign Grace and a renewed confidence in the proclamation of the gospel. In Russia there is also a deep need for Baptists to recover their theological heritage. The last few years have seen a number of translations of reformed titles (e.g. the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith, Westminster Shorter catechism, plus a limited range of Puritan and Reformed titles) which it is hoped will begin to have an influence. Many Baptist churches are riddled with Arminianism, authoritarian pastors, etc. Many evangelical Christians are afflicted with the fear that they could lose their salvation.

However, in St Petersburg, a group (with 3 Reformed Baptist families as the core) started meeting together to establish a work. Andrei Valtsev is a key participant. He came to a Reformed position around 1992/93 and studied at London Theological Seminary. On returning to his home church he was rejected for his Calvinism, but has met up with a few others of similar conviction and has begun this new work. An emphasis is on systematic and progressive exposition of the Word, which is now rare in evangelical circles. Sunday services began in April 2000, but they have yet

to constitute as a church. They have the support of a Baptist church in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania.

*Sourced from
www.banneroftruth.co.uk/News/new_petersburg_church.htm
- 29 January 2001*

World Religious News

Richard Wurmbrand 1909-2001

Pastor Richard Wurmbrand died on 17 February 2001 after a protracted illness, bringing to an end about 30 years service to the persecuted church worldwide.

Born in Romania in 1909, he married Sabrina in 1936, the same year in which they were converted and baptised. Richard was arrested in 1948 and imprisoned; subjected to various forms of torture and brainwashing. Sabrina was imprisoned and forced to serve as labour on the Danube Canal project. Upon her release in 1953 she was informed that her husband had died in prison - however he was discovered alive by a doctor and released in 1956. He continued work with the underground church until his arrest in 1959, being sentenced to 25 years prison for preaching the Scriptures. Due to international pressure, he was released in 1964, and exiled in 1965 after a \$10,000 ransom was paid by western Christians. (It would not be until 1990 that he would return to his beloved Romania.)

In October 1967, he published the first issue of *Voice of the Martyrs* - and began to establish an international ministry to support and inform Christians of persecutions worldwide. By mid-1980 the work was established in 80 restricted countries, with offices in 30 countries. Richard retired in 1992, but remained on the Board of Directors until his death.

Richard Wurmbrand authored 18 books, many of which have been translated into 38 different languages. His most well known is *Tortured for Christ* which is about his prison experiences.

Sourced from Challenge Weekly 27 February 2001

Testifying about Jesus

DAVID YAN

I begin with a challenge. The challenge is to do more personal testifying about Jesus Christ. This is a particularly needed task today. It is a fact that most people come to faith in Christ and are added to the Christian church by someone witnessing to them. In Taiwan the Lutheran Church conducted research on this matter and found that 62% of its people came to faith in Christ through the witness of a friend or family member. The Billy Graham Organisation has conducted similar tests and results have shown an even higher percentage of people coming to faith in Christ through personal witnessing. Most people do not come to faith in Christ by reading a tract or attending a gospel rally or hearing a sermon. Most people come to faith in Christ through someone witnessing to them. Given these facts we see the crucial importance of Christians engaging in personal evangelism.

In John 1:40-42 we read of Andrew witnessing to his brother Simon Peter. Andrew's witnessing is a pattern for us today.

It is a fact that most people come to faith in Christ and are added to the Christian church by someone witnessing to them.

Andrew had heard John the Baptist testify of Christ Jesus. Andrew followed after Christ Jesus and was convinced he had found the Messiah. What did Andrew then do? He went to his brother Peter, told him about Jesus and led him to Jesus. These three factors show us what testifying about Jesus is.

First, *a follower of Christ Jesus will single out known people for Jesus.* Andrew went to someone he knew - his brother. This was a sensible thing to do. He could approach his brother and speak openly of Jesus. There was already a relationship in existence. I am all for speaking to strangers about Jesus but the most effective testimony is the one given to someone you already know. It could be a family member, a friend, a colleague or a fellow student, but single out someone you know and can openly speak to.

Secondly, *a follower of Christ Jesus will tell people about Jesus.* When Andrew found his brother Peter he did not say, "We have found fish," (after all, they were fishermen), but rather, he said, "We have found the Messiah." Andrew did not talk to Peter about worldly things. He talked about Jesus!

If we have found Jesus we will, like Andrew, talk about Jesus. Remember, Andrew was enthusiastic and joyous because he had found the Messiah. Is this not at the heart of our problem with regard to outreach? We are not enthusiastic and joyous enough about Jesus.

Thirdly, *a follower of Christ Jesus will bring people to Jesus*. The third thing Andrew did was that he brought Peter to Jesus. Not only did he single out Peter; not only did he talk to him about Jesus but he actually brought Peter to Jesus. We have not actually evangelised until we have brought people to Jesus.

I know this cannot be done in the physical way that Andrew did, but we can still bring people to Jesus so that spiritually they can themselves commune with Him. This final step is often missing in our evangelism and I wish to spend more time on it. Our business is to bring people to Jesus. But do we actually do this?

I once had the opportunity to witness to a 93 year old doctor. I read to him from John 3 about the need to be born again. I explained to him as best I could what this meant and then before I left his home I prayed. Subsequently I realized I had fallen short in my witness because I did not actually lead this man to Jesus. Leading people to Jesus goes beyond just talking to people about Him. Leading people to Jesus is to bring them through our witnessing into the presence of Christ before whom they must come to a verdict as to what they will do.

After I left the 93 year old doctor I felt I should have at least asked him questions such as, "Are you willing to repent and believe upon Jesus for the forgiveness of sins?" or, "Would you like me to pray for your salvation?" Like Andrew I had singled out someone. Like Andrew I had spoken about Jesus. But unlike Andrew I had not actually taken this person to Jesus. I sought the Lord's forgiveness and resolved in future to always lead people to Jesus. By this I do not mean that our leading people to Jesus will guarantee their conversion (although we wish this were the case), but rather we must lead people to Christ so that they themselves appear before Him to carry on the 'business of their souls' welfare.

We have observed the three things Andrew did after he had found the Messiah. He singled out his brother, someone he knew. He talked about Jesus, and he led Peter to Jesus.

The lesson of all this is clear. *If people are convinced about Jesus they will witness for Him.*

Why is it that there seems to be a lack of personal witnessing in the Christian church? Might it be we are not as convinced about Jesus Christ as Andrew was? Our

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convictions are weak. We are not convinced Christ is able to save the hardened sinners we talk to and this despite the fact that we are told all authority is given to Him and that the gospel is God's power unto salvation. We are not convinced He is with us and so we are hesitant to witness and this despite the fact that He has said He would always be with us. We are not convinced He is the only way to salvation and so we weaken in our opposition to false religion. We are not convinced about His teaching on hell and so we do not have the urgency to reach the lost. We are not convinced that Jesus is heavenly and so we are worldly. The lack of personal witness in the Christian church is due, I suggest, to the fact that we are not convinced about Jesus Christ as we should be. We need a fresh touch from Him. If people are convinced about Him they will witness for Him. May the Lord send us a mighty blessing and convince us afresh of His person. Then we will be dynamic witnesses for Him. We may not be called to preach but we are called to witness, whoever we are. Not every Christian is a preacher but every Christian is a soul winner.

Imagine yourself convinced about the Lord and being a soul winner for Him. How it must please Him. Imagine the tremendous growth in the church if through the testimony of witnessing Christians a multitude of disciples is added to the church. How the Lord would be glorified! How the church would grow!

Conversely, if we do not evangelise the church will not grow. It will stagnate. This then is the challenge for all of us. Let us seek a fresh experience of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us cry out to Him for a deeper spiritual life. Let us see Him working more and more in our lives. And then let us seek out people we know and witness to them of the riches of Jesus Christ. Let us lead such people to Jesus.

Non Christian, you must consider the person of Jesus Christ. John writes to all peoples. Notice that three times he gives his readers translations of Hebrew words (John 1:38, 41, 42). John's gospel is meant to go beyond a Jewish readership. John writes so that the whole world might understand who Jesus is and that people from all nations will receive Him as their Lord and Saviour.

Fellow Christians. Be a soul winner for Jesus this year. Diligently seek out people you know. Talk to them about Jesus, not worldly things. Lead them to Jesus. Be bold. Be forthright. The Lord is with us in a special way when we witness for Him.

*This article is the summary of a sermon preached in Emmanuel Church, Auckland,
on Sunday 7 January 2001*

Asian Persuasion

JEFF LANE

written with the assistance of James Addis

Many Asians have migrated to New Zealand and to Auckland in particular. One of the places that has become a centre for the Asian community is Northcote Shopping Centre. Asians run a number of shops there, Asian foodstuffs can be bought there and Chinese videos can be rented there. The area surrounding the shopping centre has a large number of state houses many of which are occupied by Mainland Chinese.

Realising the potential, some people from the North Shore Baptist Reformed Church began an outreach to the Northcote community including the new immigrant community - giving out Christian literature and talking to people at the shopping centre. I also began doing this and in May 2000 the church decided to commission me on a part time basis for outreach to new immigrants.

One of the first things to happen, in the providence of God, was that a Chinese old people's club were looking for an English teacher, and I was able to fill that need. This resulted in a number of people coming to Bible studies, though none of the old people. In the future I would like to set up a Bible study for these old people if any are interested.

Pastor Steve Turner and I get together on a fairly regular basis at a cake shop cum café at the Northcote Shopping Centre. It is owned by a Taiwanese couple who attend our church. We then go to one of our vehicles to pray. Afterwards we give out tracks and talk with people at the shopping centre. If people stop to talk I usually try to swap telephone numbers. I then phone them up and may arrange to see them, or invite them to the Chinese Bible study. I regularly keep in contact with a core group and arrange to visit them or do things with them.

The Chinese Bible study used to run on Sunday morning before church but this fizzled out. It is now normally run on Friday evenings and conducted almost entirely in Chinese. A Mainland Chinese lady from our church also attends. In addition we have recently started a Bible study after church for people whose first language is not English. This includes three Chinese people first contacted through the outreach.

Another recent development is using the Bible to teach English to a class of Burmese refugees. This also came about through contacts made at the shopping centre. A Burmese Christian who speaks good English helped arrange this class and continues to help with it. A Chinese man who used to live in Burma also comes.

Prayer is a vital component of this work and your prayers would be greatly

appreciated. Recently I have been asked to give a monthly update of the work to the church. This will keep the church informed and better able to pray.

In summary we have found that there is a real opportunity for outreach to Mainland Chinese and lately to Burmese. God has caused, through the changes in Mainland Chinese society and the direct influence of the Holy Spirit, an openness of heart and curiosity towards the Christian faith among Mainland Chinese.

In conclusion I would recommend that individual Christians and churches seek to reach out to the many Mainland Chinese coming to their communities during this season of openness. Perhaps there will be openness among other nationalities too.

Ultimate Questions

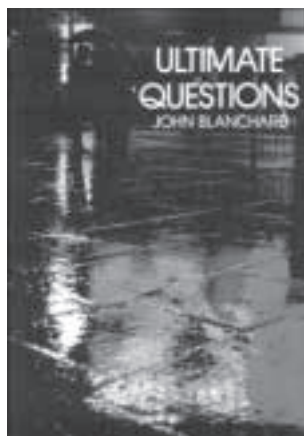
by John Blanchard

Health, finance, family, the future - life is full of questions

There are deeper questions, too.
Who am I? Why am I here? Where am I going? Does life have any purpose?

But the ultimate questions are about God.
Does he exist? What is he like? Can I know him and experience his power in my life? And if so, how?

This booklet tackles these vital questions head-on - and answers them simply, clearly and directly.



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\$2.75 each (plus NZ postage)

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Christian Authors Confront Pluralism and Atheism

A REVIEW ARTICLE BY CHRIS GOOD

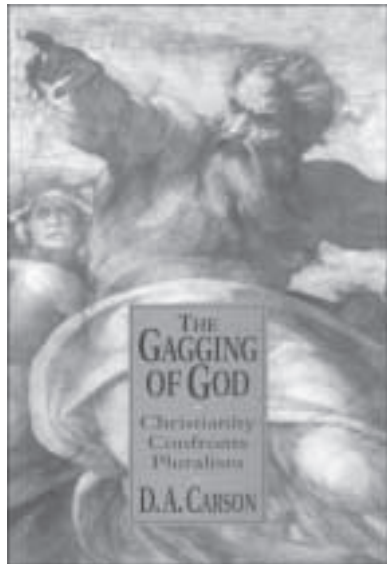
The Gagging of God

Carson's book is a scholarly evangelical and Reformed survey of and response to the rise of Postmodernism - itself a reaction against Modernism.

Modernism is a worldview that dominated Western culture for most of the 20th century that emphasised Reason alone as the key to true knowledge, along with a belief in progress through science and technology, an emphasis on the self-sufficient autonomous individual, etc. This view is exemplified in the original 1960's *Star Trek* series: Captain Kirk the self-confident autonomous man; Spock - able to solve all problems by the application of Science and Reason alone.

Postmodernism is primarily negative - anti-modern (or hyper-modern). Progress (especially moral) has not accompanied technological advances. The Postmodern is sceptical about Truth as all our reason is viewed as trapped by our experience and culture. All 'truths' are hence equally 'valid' - what Carson calls Philosophical Pluralism. Identity with a community is more important than individualism. All views must be tolerated (except those that contradict pluralistic postmodernism!). This is exemplified by *Star Trek: the Next Generation* and subsequent series, where the diverse individuals work together as in collective effort to solve their problems - and Political Correctness reigns supreme as every culture gets its say - and those that do not conform to 'toleration' are spurned. The origin of Postmodernism in popular culture can be traced back to the 1960s and its rejection of reason, authority, etc. in favour of the relativity of all values, beliefs, etc.

The first two Parts of Carson's book focus on a survey and critique of Postmodernism and Pluralism from an Evangelical perspective. A background understanding of theology and



Philosophy is required to make the most of these sections. Parts 3 and 4 are more applied and require less scholarly background - and focus more on the application of Christian principles to the issues raised by Postmodernism in society and the Church.

The heart of Carson's response to the Biblical illiteracy and indifference that we encounter in a post-Modern context is to stress the need to articulate a comprehensive perspective from the Bible's plot line of redemptive history (i.e. Creation-Fall-Redemption-Restoration) so people can recapture the biblical worldview.

The Gagging of God is an excellent example of Christian scholarship at its best - engaged with the world and its issues without compromising biblical truth. An excellent aid to the educated layman and church leaders in attempting to understand and address 21st century Western culture.

Description - from the Publisher:

In *The Gagging of God*, Professor D. A. Carson helps evangelicals respond with a clear, scholarly voice to the question, 'Is Jesus the only way to God?' This book affirms the deep need for the Gospel's exclusive message in today's increasingly pluralistic global community.

Most of the recent writings on religious pluralism have focussed on specific aspects of the subject: shifts in Western thought and interpretation, the growing cultural and racial diversity of Western nations, the fraying of evangelical thought and life, and related topics. In contrast, *The Gagging of God* offers an in-depth look at the big picture. It shows how the many ramifications of pluralism are all parts of a whole, then offers a systematic Christian response.

After an initial survey of pluralism, the book divides into four parts:

PART 1 looks at the history behind modern pluralism, especially the revolution in hermeneutics, literary theory, and epistemology.

PART 2 addresses religious pluralism, notably the work of John Hick and David Tracy, and considers inclusivists such as Clark Pinnock and John Sanders. It argues for the Bible's foundational 'plot-line' that resists liberal interpretations, and it explores what is meant by the uniqueness of Christ.

PART 3 analyses the Christian's stance in a pluralistic culture across such diverse fields as education, law, and morals.

PART 4 looks at how pluralism has penetrated the evangelical camp. It considers particular issues, such as the modern church's aversion to the subject of hell, and addresses the broader questions raised by contextualization and globalization. It offers a thoughtful look at how to evangelize in a post-modern generation.

The Gagging of God presents a persuasive case for Christ as not merely one among many ways, but the only way for people to come to a saving knowledge of God.

The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism

D. A. Carson

Apollos (an imprint of Inter-Varsity Press)

Hardcover 640 pages ISBN 0-85111-767-8

G&T price - NZ\$53.95 (incl. NZ postage)

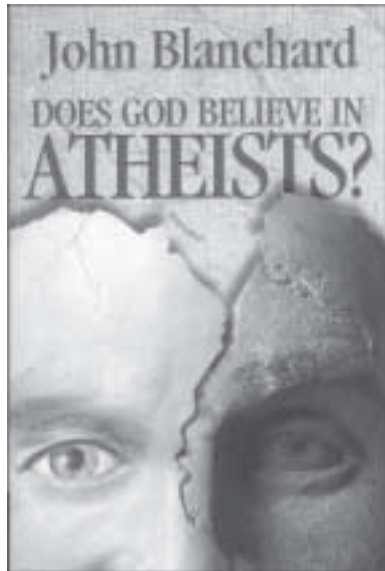
Does God Believe in Atheists?

This book is effectively an encyclopaedia for a defence of the Christian faith, drawn from a lifetime of evangelism and communicating the Faith. Blanchard exhausts almost every argument posed against Christianity by those who would seek to deny God's existence. The book includes one of the best brief defences of the superiority and infallibility of the Scriptures.

Blanchard has successfully achieved the fine balance between clarity, conciseness, readability and scholarly depth that makes the book suitable to a wide audience - even those with minimal background understanding of Christianity would benefit from it. However, the extensive endnotes allow those seeking to explore issues more deeply to be able to do this, without detracting from the readability and flow of the main text.

The book moves from the more philosophical and abstract issues, through the more applied topics of Evolution, Other religions, etc - ending at the most personal and powerful objection: the problem of evil and suffering. It improves as it goes - a cumulative case for God that climaxes with a powerful evangelistic presentation of God in Christ as the divine answer to the human condition.

The main weakness of the book is that in the desire to be comprehensive, some points can only be covered in the barest detail. This is most



obvious in the chapter on other religions - some of which are only dealt with in a paragraph or two. However, in general the content is enough to address the arguments.

Read the book to discover how in some ways there are no Atheists, while in other ways we are all, by nature, born Atheists.

Description - from the Publisher:

Written in a highly readable fashion, this major new work represents a lifetime of reading and study. Clarity, thoroughness, readability and cogency are hallmarks of this superb resource, ideal for Christians, agnostics and atheists alike.

- Traces the development of atheistic and agnostic thinking from the 'Golden Age' of Greek philosophy to the present day
- Pinpoints the influence of thinkers such as Immanuel Kant, Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger, Albert Camus, Jean-Paul Sartre and Bertrand Russell, and shows how their teaching has helped to shape modern atheistic and agnostic ideas
- Traces the rise of Dawinian evolutionism and uncovers the weaknesses in claims made by its contemporary exponents such as Richard Dawkins and Peter Atkins
- Exposes the fallacies of determinism, existentialism and secular humanism
- Highlights the fundamental flaws in nine world religions and fourteen major cults
- Shows why true science and true religion are not enemies, but friends
- Examines the critical issue of how a God of love can allow suffering and evil

"Talk about a magnum opus! This is Blanchard at his best: immensely thorough, crystal clear, devastating in his logic, compassionate at heart. No stone is left unturned: a brilliant defence of belief in God - and its implications!" - Andrew Anderson, International Baptist Church, Brussels

Does God Believe in Atheists?

John Blanchard

Evangelical Press

Hardcover 656 pages ISBN 0-85234-460-0

G&T price - \$NZ62.95 (incl. NZ postage)

*Both titles may be ordered online or by post from Grace & Truth Publications.
See page 30 for contact details.*

A Church We Know Of

C. H. SPURGEON

Aptness to discover and report faults is a very common gift. A good nose for heresy and a quick ear for slander are very ordinary endowments. In the Book of Record there are innumerable entries concerning the worldliness, discord, and general declension of the churches, and some of these are as full of lamentation as the prophet's roll. If it be faithfulness to publish failures and sins on the part of God's people, there has certainly been no lack of faithfulness in these last days; it even strikes us that the virtue has been a little overdone. Wise men and fools have been alike eager to try their pens at writing bitter things against the degenerate church of God. One could have wished that there had been more plentiful traces of tears blotting the record, and that the penman's hand had quivered a little with sorrowful emotion; but still the memorial has been made with stern fidelity, and nothing has been extenuated. A ruthless severity which has never fallen short of the truth has drawn the indictment, collected the evidence, and commented thereon unsparingly. Well, there may have been a need for all this; at least it will be wisest for the church to receive it all in the spirit of the saint who said, "Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness, and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil which shall not break my head." At any rate, let us hope that those who penned the charges and reported the evil deeds were themselves all the easier when they had relieved their minds.

Let the way of the faithful faultfinders shine with honour: we have, however, no wish to follow in their track while speaking of a church and people that are just now in our thoughts, and we could not if we would, for it would require us to be false to facts and untrue to our own heart. If all churches were as a church we know of, if all manifested the same unity, concord, and zeal, the very smallest drop of gall which ever entered into the composition of ink would be far too much to write out the complaints of a century. The reader may accuse us of partiality, but we cannot help it: if others have taken leave to vilify dissenting churches, both in the measured language of distinct accusation and by the sneering caricatures of fiction, we also will have our say and give forth our opinion and experience concerning the one church of which we are better able to judge than any other living man. Facts are facts, and ought to be as freely stated to honour as to dishonour. Is detraction necessarily more impartial than praise? Must justice of necessity condemn? Is it not as faithful to praise the good as to censure the evil? So far as we can judge, the popular part is that of the censorious critic, while he who praises will certainly be suspected and will probably be condemned as a flatterer,

or an injudicious partisan. We accept the difficult and unenviable position, and will speak the truth come what may of it.

The pastor of a church which we know of was weary in mind and needed rest. He had but to intimate the need, and he was urged to do as he judged best, and what is better, they furnished him with the means to make holiday whenever he pleased. Quietly and unostentatiously this was attended to as a matter of course, but it was none the less gratefully received. No one had any wish but that the pastor whom they loved should find refreshment from mental strain, and come back full of the blessing of the gospel of peace.

Nothing can be worse than to see a people scattered hither and thither because their elect preacher is unavoidably absent; it looks as if the work depended upon a single life, and it raises the suspicion that the faith of the hearers stands rather in the force of human teaching than in the power of the Holy Ghost.

In due time the pastor was gone - what then? Did matters flag, congregations fall off, and prayer-meetings decline? Far otherwise. Of course there was less of a crowd of outsiders at Sabbath services, but the people, the flock, did not wander; it was their point of honour to fill the house, and let the good men who occupied the pastor's place feel that they were appreciated. Good old Dr. Liefchild used to tell a merry story of his chapel-keeper, which is worth repeating. "Ah. Doctor," said the old lady, "there is one point in which I admire you above all the preachers I ever knew, for the most of them when they go away fill up their pulpits with any sticks they can find, but you never do that. I was only saying the other day that you never go out but what you send us a better preacher than yourself." The pastor we are writing of always endeavours to imitate Dr. Liefchild in this point, and if he does not elicit quite so outspoken an eulogium he at any rate tries to deserve it. Yet even with the best substitutes, certain fickle ones will not be kept at home, and therefore it is the more pleasant to meet with a church which is free

from this fault. Nothing can be worse than to see a people scattered hither and thither because their elect preacher is unavoidably absent; it looks as if the work depended upon a single life, and it raises the suspicion that the faith of the hearers stands rather in the force of human teaching than in the power of the Holy Ghost. If ever a church member should vacate his seat it should not be in the minister's absence, for it sets an

ill example and tends greatly to the discouragement of the servant of the Lord who has undertaken to minister temporarily in the congregation. The people of whom we write escape all just remark on this score, though from the absence of the strangers and the mixed multitude of curiosity-hearers some have taken opportunity to offer ungenerous and untruthful insinuations.

But what of the prayer-meetings? The church which is now in our mind's eye has always been given to prayer, and its assemblies for supplication constitute its main peculiarity and its source of strength. Some have hinted that interesting addresses are the potent attraction and that the presence of the pastor is a lodestone to many. How then did the preacher's absence tell upon the gatherings? Did the numbers dwindle down? No, they were greater rather than less. The praying people felt all the more their responsibility to sustain the sacred work of intercession, and therefore they mustered in full force; they would not desert the junior pastor, and the deacons and elders, rather did they feel that they must rally round them, and make the meetings for supplication more hearty and more prevalent. The senior pastor was prayed for with all the greater freedom because of his absence, and all his helpers were also the more fervently commended to the divine keeping because of the extra duties which devolved upon them. The Holy Spirit gave life to the supplications, and the praying brethren being many, and well led by earnest officers, the prayer-meetings were memorably excellent, and full of refreshment.

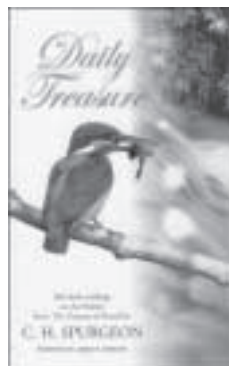
But it will at least be imagined that special efforts would slacken, or perhaps be suspended. Cruel sneers at the 'one-man ministry' are often backed up by the question, "If the one man were gone, what would you do?" The church of which we are now writing is a fair specimen of this much-

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by C. H. Spurgeon

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decried one-man ministry, and what is its fruit, what are its capacities when the despised 'one man' is out of the way? Why, it is so soundly vital, so universally at work, so independent of any one individual, that it of its own accord selected the period of the senior pastor's vacation for the holding of special services that there might be no call upon him for extra exertion, and that there might be an additional hold upon the young people to compensate for his absence. Those services under the divine blessing were attended with the best results. At the very commencement interest was excited, and very soon enthusiasm was amused; the officers were punctually at their posts, and the members who are addicted to soul-winning were there too; speakers were found among themselves, and, supplemented by brother ministers, sufficed to arouse and sustain the revival spirit. Week after week the services went on with growing energy, backsliders were restored, saints quickened, and sinners converted. The brethren, as one man, put their necks to the work of the Lord, and laboured, with double diligence. Beloved leaders were to the front, but there was no lack of the rank and file. The people needed no eloquent appeals or pressing exhortations, they had a mind to the Redeemer's glory, and therefore each one conscientiously took his place and filled it, and the Lord smiled on the united and earnest work of his people. No one could ascribe honour to the 'one man' in the conversions wrought during his absence, and at the same time there was no fear of his instrumentality being despised among so attached a people, and therefore it seemed good unto the Lord to bless the efforts of his servants very remarkably. What a joy is this to the minister! How deeply he loves, and how greatly he honours the brethren who have thus dealt faithfully to the great Head of the church! What union of heart he feels with his noble band of helpers! God is very gracious in having raised up such men, and in having made them able to go in and out before the Lord's people with zeal and discretion clothed with the divine power.

Content, yea, delighted, to consecrate their substance and their gifts to the common cause, some of them labour more abundantly for the church than for their own secular business, while others to whom worldly possessions are denied do not envy their fellows, but heap up such things as they have upon the altar of the Lord, and by the unceasing sacrifice of time and toil for the good of the church earn unto themselves a good degree. Strife as to which shall be the greatest is altogether banished, but a sacred emulation as to which shall best conduct his own department still remains. Imperfect tempers, and erring dispositions are kept in check by the divine Spirit, and a powerful public sentiment of love and unity rules the little commonwealth, so that incipient evils are nipped in the bud. The Lord has done it, and it is marvellous in our eyes. Poor human nature could never compass a score years of peaceful fellowship, but a baptism

Continued on page 21



The Sinner's Substitute

Dear Readers,

Do you know what a substitute is? I expect you have seen rugby matches or games of netball or some other team sport. Usually there comes a time in the game where one person comes off the field and someone else goes on in their place - this person is called a substitute: someone who takes the place of another to finish off what he had started.

Did you know that Jesus Christ is called a Substitute? It is not because He takes someone's place in a game, but because He has stood in the place of sinners and taken the punishment they should have received. Easter is coming, and it is a time when Christians remember what Jesus has done for them in being their Substitute. Here's a short story that might help you to picture what Jesus has done for sinners.

Tom burst in through the front door and ran gasping up the stairs. Jim dashed from his room to see what was wrong and met his younger brother, with blood smeared shirt, crying uncontrollably.

"What's up?" Jim demanded.

"I... I... I killed him," sobbed Tom.

Immediately Jim pictured what had happened. Tom had been hanging out with one of the local gangs recently and had been in a number of brawls with a neighbouring gang. This time things had obviously gone too far and Tom had been in the middle of it all.

"Quick," commanded Jim, "give me your shirt and get out of sight."

After some persuasion Tom exchanged his shirt for his brother's. Jim hurriedly changed into Tom's shirt and raced out into the street to join the rest of the gang in their desperate race from the police. He knew where they usually hung out and he headed in that direction. Running at full speed into the road leading to the gang's base he collided with a cop. That was it. He was handcuffed and tumbled into a police car soon to find himself in a prison cell awaiting trial.

The case passed through the courts and Jim was convicted of involvement in

the murder of a guy from the other gang. He was sentenced to time in prison and took the punishment which should really have been his brother's.

Though this is just a story it is based upon something that actually happened. Tom is like those who have done something to break God's law and deserve to be punished. Jim is like Jesus Christ who came to be a substitute for those who would accept Him. He offered to take their place and meet God's demand for justice. He received the punishment that they should receive allowing them to be free from that punishment which they really deserved for their sin.

The Bible describes sin as filthy clothing which needs to be removed: Zechariah writes, "Take away the filthy garments from him... See, I have removed your iniquity from you, and I will clothe you with rich robes" (Zechariah 3:4). Isaiah describes these rich robes saying, "He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness" (Isaiah 61:10). Without this change of clothing we are condemned - we bear the marks of rebellion against our Creator. Our sin has made us filthy in the sight of God and we need to be made clean. God is the only one who can do this work - He alone can remove our rags of sin and clothe us with righteousness. He does this when we turn from our sin and trust in Jesus Christ's death in the place of sinners. The Apostle Peter said, "Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out..." and later he insisted, concerning Jesus, "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 3:19, 4:12).

Do you want to be free from the punishment that you deserve because of your sin? The greatest news in the world is that you can be saved from the results of sin when you turn to Jesus Christ in the way I've just described. I am praying that all who read this will learn to trust in Jesus and live for Him from now on.

With Best wishes,

Dafydd

Kids'
Corner

For you to do!

Easter is a time when we think about the sufferings, death and resurrection of Jesus. Each of the Gospels tells the story:

Matthew 26:47 - 28:15

Mark 14:43 - 16:7

Luke 22:47 - 24:12

John 18:1 - 20:18




Read any of these passages to find out whose place Jesus took on the cross. This is a picture of how Jesus is a Substitute for sinners.

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A Church We Know Of (continued)

into the one Spirit has accomplished it, and works mightily still to the same end. Glory be to God for it.

But did no work flag? None. The over-looking eye doeth much; did not some things drag when in some measure let alone? No, not so much as one. The workers were more than ordinarily diligent, and the various agencies were rather quickened than retarded. Contributions did not fall off, the weekly offering was up to its general average; in fact, in the direction of liberality certain special matters were devised, arranged, and carried through with peculiar promptitude, and were reported to the pastor only as accomplished facts. The watchman's eye fails to detect a failure anywhere, and it is lifted to heaven in adoring gratitude because "all is well."

These things are not written to magnify man, nor out of mere personal affection, but that they may stimulate others. This church prospers with the increase of God, and do you wonder? Where there is little love between pastor and people can the good work succeed? Where everything depends upon incessant whip and spur can there be real prosperity? Where the work of the Lord is official business, and the members find little else to do except to gossip, dispute, and quarrel, can the Holy Spirit dwell with them? There must be the graces of love, unity, zeal, or we cannot expect to see the hand of the Lord stretched out in power. We are afraid that there are churches still in existence where every church-meeting is anticipated with anxiety lest it should be made a season of debate, where family feuds poison the springs of Christian fellowship, and where differences of opinion upon vital doctrines effectually prevent any approach to spiritual unity. Under such conditions edification may be sighed for in vain, and the conversion of sinners may be regarded as most improbable. Surely there has been enough of that scrupulosity which wars a fierce warfare about microscopic points, and it is time to turn our care and energy into a more profitable direction. To remove everything which genders unto strife, to overcome evil with no weapon but love, to be eager to do service to the least of the Lord's people, and to be on a blaze with zeal for his cause - this is far, far better than cold decorum and watchful suspicion. Whatever else is lacking in a church, love must be present, or the best sign of blessing is absent. How sweetly does the inspired poet rehearse the praises of fraternal unity! But his warmest expressions are justified by experience.

Behold how good a thing it is,
And how becoming well,
Together such as brethren are
In unity to dwell.

Let churches do less in criticizing their minister, and do more in praying for him; let them expect less from him and more from God; let them, as a whole, arise and put on strength; let them have no strife but which shall best serve the brotherhood to edification, and they will yet see the windows of heaven opened and a blessing poured out upon them unspeakably beyond their largest hopes. "The same God over all is rich unto all that call upon him." He is a sovereign, but yet he acts according to recognized rule, and when a people are loving, living, labouring, and longing for his presence, that presence will be vouchsafed. When church fellowship is not a mere name, but a blessed, joyful, active reality, when those who are called 'brethren,' are really so, then may we look for the blessing which maketh rich. Only the Lord can give to a church the condition requisite for success, but when he gives it he will not fail to send the corresponding increase. Churches need to be more loving within if they would be more powerful without. They must be more hearty, and more like a family; the shepherd and the flock must be on more tender terms, and brotherhood must be brotherhood indeed, and then shall we see greater things than these.

We have not space to give the letters which the pastor from Sabbath to Sabbath addressed to his loving people, but one telegram which he sent and the reply are worthy to be remembered, as they fairly express the mutual love and esteem which fills their hearts. The telegram from the pastor ran thus: "To my beloved church. John's Second Epistle, third and twelfth verses." This, when written out in full, reads as follows: "Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love. Having many things to write unto you, I would not write with paper and ink; but I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face, that our joy may be full."

The answer sent was as follows: "Yours to hand. Our reply. To our beloved Pastor. We give thanks always to God for you, making mention of you in our prayers. Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope, in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father."

This article first appeared in the April 1877 issue of the Sword & Trowel

"Christ is the very essence of all delights and pleasures, the very soul and substance of them. As all the rivers are gathered into the ocean, which is the meeting place of all the waters in the world, so Christ is that ocean in which all true delights and pleasures meet." *John Flavel (1628-1691)*

The Word of God v. Tradition

JOHN QUINCY ADAMS

“Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.”
(Matthew 15:6)

Every reform in religion presupposes the existence of errors, evil in their tendencies and results, which have gradually crept into ecclesiastical organisations, and which need to be removed in order that such organisations may become pure and scriptural. A reform is not the introduction of a new system of religion, but rather the revival of the old system, and the assertion of its supremacy over the innovations of men. It is not a movement based on the pretended reception of a new revelation, conflicting with previous ones from an unchanging Jehovah, but it is the enforcement of the commands and precepts which have already been revealed, but which have been obscured, and invalidated, and made of none effect by human tradition.

Thus it was with the Great Reform introduced by Jesus Christ. He declared that he came “not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it.” In the prosecution of his mission, he utterly disregarded the religious rites which owed their origin to mere human invention, and, by a studied non-observance of the traditions of the Jewish elders, he constantly exhibited his disapprobation of them. At the same time, he taught principles, which, if carried out, would restore the supremacy of God’s law, and effectually remove every vestige of this usurpation of authority by man. This course brought down upon him the displeasure of those who were wedded to the rites of tradition, while they neglected the more important commands of God. They therefore came to expostulate with him in reference to the course pursued by him, saying, “Why do thy disciples transgress the traditions of the elders?” But Jesus, in reply, asked them a far more pertinent and weighty question: “Why do you also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?” and then, after citing a case in point, he charged them, in the words of the text, with making void the law of God, by substituting their unscriptural observances for his divine commands:- “Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.”

There exists today a body of Christians, who are labouring to effect the same kind of reform as that in which the blessed Saviour was engaged, more than eighteen hundred years ago. That body, though designated since the days of Christ by various names, is known, at the present time, by the name of Baptists.

Many persons suppose, that the only difference between Baptists and other

evangelical denominations, is respecting the mode and subjects of baptism. This is, indeed, the principal external difference: but this difference exhibits the adherence, on the part of Baptists, to a great and important principle, which is involved in their action, and which they believe to be violated by those who differ from them in this matter. An illustration of their position is found in the text and its connection. The washing of a person's hands before eating, was, in itself, a small matter; but it involved, in this instance, a sinful obtruding of human tradition in the place of divine commands.

This is just the principle that is involved in the practice of infant sprinkling. We announce, then, as the First Feature of the reform in which Baptists are engaged,

The Exaltation of the Word of God above Tradition, in all Matters of Religious Duty.

There has always been a conflict between Divine revelation and human tradition; and yet the advocates of the latter have almost invariably endeavoured to reconcile it with the former, and thus the Word of God is often distorted in vain efforts to make it support that which is of merely human origin. The ultimate effect of these efforts is to divide the Bible against itself, and to cause it to be utterly disregarded as the standard of appeal in matters of religious duty. It was thus with the traditions of the Jewish elders. Those who followed them, and practised their rites, ceased to regard the Scriptures which they possessed as the standard of duty; they became a dead letter, and the tradition of the

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origin.*

elders - not the Scriptures - was the authority they cited for the support of their rites. "For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother; and he that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me, and honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition."

The same result followed, when the disciples listened to the voice of tradition. On one occasion Christ said, in reference to John, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" Tradition immediately distorted the question into an assertion: "Then went that saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die" (John 21:22-23). Here tradition uttered a falsehood, and taught as usual, a lie.

It is thus, also, in reference to the Church of Rome. Tradition after tradition has been received, until it becomes dangerous to the interests of that church to permit her

deluded members to read God's Word - so directly are her traditions opposed to that Word. And, in order to sustain herself, she vainly arrogates to herself infallibility, and exalts herself above the Bible, and makes the commandment of God of none effect by her tradition. The will of the Pope, and the decisions of councils, are made the standards of appeal, and the Bible is a dead letter. And yet this same church, in all her corruption, endeavours to reconcile her traditions, in some instances, with the Bible; but, in order to do it, she distorts and invents Scripture to suit herself.

On what does the Papacy rest to support its penances, and image-worship, and prayers to the saints, and priestly absolutions, and, in short, its very existence? I reply in one word, *Tradition*. Let the Bible become her standard, and she would cease to exist. She has made almost every commandment of God of none effect by her tradition.

Thus it is, also, with Protestant Paedobaptist churches. Tradition is the basis on which infant sprinkling rests. We look in vain for any command in reference to it in the Bible; the Scriptures utter not a word in support of it. The most able Paedobaptists have themselves admitted this. Says Dr. Woods, an eminent Paedobaptist: "Whatever may have been the precepts of Christ, or his apostles, to those who enjoyed their personal instructions, it is plain there is *no express precept* respecting infant baptism in our sacred writings. The proof, then, that infant baptism is a divine institution, must be made out some other way."¹ He says further: "The want of an express, positive command of Scripture that infants should be baptized, is not to be considered as a valid objection against infant baptism."²

It is here plainly admitted that there is no command for infant baptism in the Word of God. But we do not need these admissions to substantiate our assertion. We simply appeal to the Bible itself. If it was there, we could see it for ourselves. We ask anyone to show us the first instance of the sprinkling of an infant, or any command to administer baptism to infants. It cannot be found. Thousands of dollars have been offered for the production of a single text, authorizing the practice; but these premiums have never been claimed. On what, then, does it rest? I reply, *on tradition*. Dr. Woods says that authority for it, "may be afforded particularly by an *unwritten tradition*." It is a human invention, having no higher authority than that of man. It is one of the traditions which the Protestant Reformers brought from Rome. It is the main "pillar" on which Popery rests; for, if you take away the baptism of infants, Rome would soon fall. Its defence necessitates Romish arguments; and instances are not wanting where Paedobaptists, in combatting Romanists, have either been compelled to use arguments fatal to their own practices, or else be defeated.³ And it is a matter of history, that Protestant arguments against Baptists have often been used by Romanists against Protestants themselves. A forcible proof of this is seen in the following extract from the Roman Catholic Catechism:

“Q. Can Protestants prove to Baptists, that the baptism of infants is good and useful?

“A. No; they cannot; because, according to Protestant principles, such baptism is useless.

“Q. Why do you say this?

“A. One of the Protestant principles is, that no human being can be justified except by an act of faith in Jesus Christ; but no infant is capable of making this act of faith; therefore, upon Protestant principles, the baptism of infants is useless.

“Q. Can you draw the same consequence from any other principle?

“A. Yes; their first principle is, that nothing is to be practised which is not authorized by Scriptural example; *but it does not appear from Scripture, that even one infant was ever baptised*; therefore Protestants should reject, on their own principle, infant baptism as an unscriptural usage.

“Q. How do Baptists treat other Protestants?

“A. They boast that the Scripture is evidently for Baptist practice - that other Protestants hold traditional doctrines, like the Catholics. They quote Matthew 28: ‘Go teach all nations baptising them,’ from which they say it is clear that *teaching* should go before baptism; hence they conclude that as infants cannot be taught, so neither should they be baptized, until they are capable of teaching or instruction.

“Q. What use do they make of Mark 16: ‘He who *believeth* and is baptised shall be saved?’

“A. They say it is evident that belief or faith must precede baptism; but they add infants are not capable of believing; therefore neither are they capable of being baptised.

“Q. What can Protestants reply to this Baptist reasoning?

“A. They may give these passages another meaning; but they can never prove that their interpretation is better than that of the Baptists, because they themselves give every one a right to interpret Scripture.

“Q. How do Catholics prove that infants ought to be baptised?

“A. Not from Scripture alone, which is not very clear on this subject, but from the Scripture illustrated by the constant tradition of the church.

“Q. Can Protestants use this argument of tradition against the Baptists?

“A. No; they have no right to use it in this matter, *where it would serve them*, since they reject it in every question where it is opposed to their novel and lately invented doctrines.”⁴

Says the President of the famous Council of Trent, a Roman Catholic Cardinal, speaking of the Baptists: “And surely, how many soever have written against this heresy, whether they were Catholics or Reformers, they were able to overthrow it, not so much by the testimony of the Scriptures, as by the authority of the Church.” And Bayle, in his Critical

Dictionary, says that the Protestants were obliged to meet the Baptists with arguments which were turned against them by the papists. Dr. Woods furnishes us an illustration of this assertion. He says: "It is unquestionable, that the knowledge of some extraordinary events of providence, or of some divine injunctions, may be as truly and as certainly communicated in this way, [by an unwritten tradition,] as in others; and we should in many cases, consider a man who should refuse to admit the truth and authority of a tradition, to be as unreasonable, as if he should refuse to admit the authority of written or printed records."⁵ Now I ask if this is not giving up to Rome all she claims? "We should consider a man who should refuse to admit the authority of tradition, to be as unreasonable as if he should refuse to admit the authority of written or printed records!" Will not Popery heartily endorse this doctrine? Now on what kind of traditionary authority does infant sprinkling rest? Why, upon the same as every other corruption of Rome; and if Romish tradition be followed in this case, why not in all others? Thus, we have shown that infant sprinkling requires Romish arguments. Now, the simple reason of this is, that, like the other rites of Popery, it is founded in tradition.

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Further, the commandment of God is made of none effect by this tradition. God has given express and plain commands, in reference to every duty and ordinance. He has commanded believers to be baptised; He has extended the command to none others. Those baptised in infancy, in a multitude of cases, grow up in unbelief, and never become believers. But where they do become converts, they are taught, by the tradition of the church, that their infant baptism is sufficient, and they are not expected to be baptised after believing. And even when persons sprinkled in infancy are led, by the study of the Bible, to desire baptism after they have believed, strong efforts are always made to dissuade them from it, and they are

often compelled to go to the Baptists in order to be baptized. These things are of such common occurrence, that it is unnecessary to relate instances in proof. Thus the Word of God is made of no effect.

Again, Paedobaptists, like the Jewish elders, endeavour to reconcile their tradition with the Word of God. Look at their reasoning: "Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me, *and honour not his father or his mother*, he shall be free." Paedobaptists say: "If any persons be sprinkled in infancy, *and be not baptised after they believe*, it is sufficient." There is an exact parallel. Here you perceive the reasonings of men, in both instances, though opposed to the

express command of God, are made the standard, instead of his Word. Would it not sound strange to hear a Paedobaptist minister urge his people to simply follow the teaching and example of Christ, in reference to baptism? Yet this is right; but this comes directly in contact with their tradition.

Now Baptists are opposed to tradition, any where and every where; whether they find it in the Church of Rome, or in Protestant churches. They aim to elevate the Word of God above tradition, as the standard of duty in all places. It is professedly the grand doctrine of Protestantism - which Protestants themselves have abandoned - that Baptists steadily maintain. They aim to bring all to this standard. They, themselves, have always adhered to the Bible. Did anyone ever hear of Baptists being charged with following tradition? The charge would be ridiculously absurd; for they have always opposed tradition as a guide in matters of religious duty.

From these remarks it will be perceived, that while the subjects and mode of baptism is the external ground of difference between Baptists and others, that difference involves a great principle; and the primary question is not, Shall infants be baptized? but, whether God's Word or tradition shall be our guide. God has uttered his will in the matter. That will we follow, as we find it in his Word. Those who oppose us, by their own showing, follow tradition. We are labouring to effect a reform. In doing so we refer all to the Bible. We assert its supremacy above all human teaching, our own, as well as that of others.

This, then, is a prominent feature of the reform in which Baptists are engaged. And I observe it is most important and necessary. Especially is it necessary

1. *In combatting error.* If tradition be allowed in one particular, who will prohibit it in another? Romanism is gaining ground in this country; it is a religion of tradition. Who will oppose it? Those who are themselves trammelled by tradition? To every argument, they can retort, as they have done, "Where do you get your infant sprinkling?" The most staunch Romanist asks nothing more than the adoption of the principle, contained in the language already quoted, of a Protestant Paedobaptist in support of infant sprinkling: "We should consider a man who should refuse to admit the truth and authority of tradition, to be as unreasonable as if he should refuse to admit the truth of written or printed records." No Paedobaptist can consistently oppose Romanism. There is no consistent position between the Romish and the Baptist church. Tradition leads to the one - the Word of God to the other. Infidelity and Rationalism, also, are rearing their heads in our midst, and who shall meet them? Their cry is, "Priestcraft, and ministerial dictation!" Who shall meet them? Those who suffer their ministers to tell them what to believe, and to dictate whether they shall investigate a subject or not? No! but those who are prepared, by an independent investigation, and

a manly appeal to the Bible, to show the falsity of their charges. This feature of reform is necessary

2. *To the purity of the Church.* No organisation can be pure, without a pure standard. Tradition is liable to perversion; there is no certainty about it. Today it assumes one position, tomorrow an opposite one. Thus it has ever been. The Church of Rome, though claiming infallibility, has constantly changed her ground of action, because governed by the variable standard of tradition. This is no less true of Protestant Paedobaptism. Today, infants are sprinkled on one ground; tomorrow that ground is abandoned, and another, directly opposite to it, is urged, as a reason for administering the rite. Anon, both these are abandoned, and a new position, with a new set of arguments is introduced.

This is strikingly illustrated in the experience of Simon Menno, a Romish priest, who in 1530 was converted to Christ, and to Baptist sentiments, by reading the New Testament. He says: "I examined the Scriptures with diligence and meditated on them earnestly, but could find in them no authority for infant baptism. As I remarked this, I

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spoke of it to my pastor, and after several conversations he acknowledged that infant baptism had no ground in the Scriptures. Yet I dare not trust so much to my understanding. I consulted some ancient authors, who taught me that children must, by baptism, be washed from their original sin. This I compared with the Scriptures and perceived that it set at naught the blood of Christ. Afterward I went to Luther, and would gladly have known from him the ground; and he taught me that we must baptise children on their own faith, because they are holy. This also I saw was not according to God's Word. In the third place I went to Bucer, who taught me that we should baptise children in order to be

able the more diligently to take care of them, and bring them up in the ways of the Lord. But this too, I saw, was a groundless representation. In the fourth place I had recourse to Bullinger, who pointed me to the covenant of circumcision; but I found as before, that, according to Scripture, the practice could not stand. As I now on every side observed that the writers stood on grounds so very different, and each followed his own reason, I saw clearly that we were deceived with infant baptism."

Can the church be pure with such a contradictory guide as tradition? Never!

Finally, I inquire, Does the charge of the text lie against any of my Christian

brethren? If you have neglected baptism since you believed, because you were sprinkled in infancy, it most assuredly does. Your sprinkling rests on tradition. The Bible says, "He that believeth and is baptised, shall be saved." "Repent and be baptised, every one of you." If, because sprinkled in infancy, you refuse now to obey Christ, we say to you, in His own truthful language, "Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition!"

This article is taken from John Quincy Adams' book, Baptists, the only thorough religious reformers, published in 1876. C. H. Spurgeon used this as a textbook in his Pastor's College, regarding it as the best Manual of Baptist principles he had met.

Notes:

1. Woods, *Lectures on Infant Baptism*, pp.10-11.
2. *Ibid.*, p.17.
3. This is strikingly illustrated in the celebrated Letters of "Kirwan" (Rev. Dr. Murray, a Protestant Paedobaptist) to Bishop Hughes. He says: "Once secure a just and scriptural view of the character of a true minister of Christ, and of the great end of a gospel ministry, and the whole framework of popery vanishes." "A true minister is one who, with the love of God and of the salvation of men filling his soul, goes out into all the ways which providence opens before him, preaching everywhere, as did Peter and Paul, 'repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.' He has only one object - to lead men to the knowledge of the truth. He goes out with an open Bible, to expound it, praying that the Holy Spirit may so apply its truths to the hearts of his hearers, that they may be created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works. *To those who believe, he administers the rite of baptism*, and, as God gives him opportunity, he administers the Lord's Supper to the faithful, for the purpose of commemorating the death of Christ, until he comes the second time without sin unto salvation. Such were the ministers of Christ before the rise of popery; and such only are the true ministers of Christ now." *Kirwan's Letters to Bishop Hughes, Second Series*, pp.90-91. No intelligent reader need be reminded that this is language utterly at variance with Paedobaptist teaching and practice.
4. *Doctrinal Catechism of Catholic Faith and Practice*, approved by the Most Rev. John Hughes, pp.184-186.
5. Woods, *Lectures on Infant Baptism*, p.17.

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Affordable prices
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Christ's Victorious Submission

DAFYDD HUGHES

The fourteenth chapter of Mark's Gospel brings us to the penultimate day in the life of Jesus Christ. The chapter briefly describes events that took place between Tuesday and Thursday afternoon and then in more detail the events of the remainder of the day and night before Jesus' death on the cross.

The opening two verses provide a glimpse at the increasing desperation of the religious leaders; they were incensed by Jesus' words to them which humiliated them before the people in the temple (see Mark 11:27-12:34). Their dedication to destroying this man increased, and they were willing to go to any length to do it; even deception and lies became acceptable so long as this menace was removed.

We are then told that Jesus attended a meal in Bethany during which a woman anointed Him with expensive perfume. It was a moving display of a sinner's devotion to her Saviour: this jar of perfume cost in the region of a whole year's wages! In contrast, Judas Iscariot, who had spent the last three years in the presence of Jesus, watching His healing power and listening to His wise teaching, parted from the rest of the group to negotiate a deal with the chief priests in which he would receive money in exchange for betraying Jesus. He earned the equivalent of just three month's wages in this dirty deal. It is difficult to comprehend how someone who had seen so much of Jesus' wisdom, love and purity could stoop to doing such a thing.

On the Thursday the Passover feast took place. During the meal Jesus instituted what we now refer to as the 'Lord's Supper'. Immediately following this and before they sang a hymn Judas left the room to prepare his dastardly deed. Jesus and the remaining eleven disciples then made their way to the garden of Gethsemane where Jesus spent some time in prayer to His Father.

It has been said that the victory of the cross was gained in Gethsemane. In other words, Jesus made specific preparation for the events of the following twenty-four hours during this evening in the garden. It was the decision made here that ensured the outcome on Calvary. It is this that I want to explore here by considering Mark 14:36 in particular.

The Almighty Power of God

There are those who explain the use of the word 'Abba' in verse 36 as though Jesus was talking to God the Father as a young child today would refer to his father as 'daddy'. In

doing so they encourage an informality verging on presumption in the Christians approach to God. The significance of this word lies elsewhere. For though the Hebrew word 'Abba' was initially used only by young children, by the first century it was also used by an adult with reference to his own personal father though never with reference to someone else's father. Mark's addition of the Greek word for 'father' is most likely his translation (as he has done in the past with Hebrew words or phrases, e.g. 5:41): neither Matthew nor Luke record a repetition, as though "Abba, Father" were some magical password to God's blessing. Rather, we should think of it as a bracketed translation given by an editor.

Why bother including the original Hebrew as well as the Greek translation? The significance of the Hebrew is that it highlights the fact that Jesus claimed God as His own *personal* Father and emphasizes the fact that in this hour of great distress He went for help and comfort not to His mother, nor to His friends, but to His true Father. His disciples are of no help to Him. Indeed, we actually find them sleeping while Jesus is praying. Jesus has gone to the One for whom, as He Himself says, "all things are possible". The Son of God is praying to His Father, but He is doing so distinctly as a man, in His weakness and frailty, in His rôle as the representative of mankind. He comes to the almighty God, but let us not misunderstand Christ's words here.

Jesus is not saying that God can do all things without exception. James tells us (1:13) that God cannot be tempted to evil and, by implication, He cannot sin. In Numbers 23:19 we are told categorically that God cannot promise to do something and then fail to perform it, or, as Paul reminded Timothy, God cannot deny Himself (2 Timothy 2:13) - He cannot be unfaithful.

Therefore what Jesus is saying here is that God can do all His holy will. The will of God is the context in which He is praying. Nothing can thwart, divert or hinder God from fulfilling His plans or purposes (see, for example, Genesis 18:14). With these words Jesus Christ acknowledges the almighty power of God to perform whatever action is consistent with His holy character.

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The human anguish of Christ

The next phrase demonstrates the great turmoil that Christ was going through at this time. The imagery of the cup here is drawn from the Old Testament where it meant to fully undergo an experience. The experience could be favourable (e.g. Psalm 23:5) or unfavourable (e.g. Psalm 11:6). Here it is clearly the latter. Christ is referring to the suffering that awaits Him following His betrayal.

Throughout His life Jesus was fully aware that He must suffer and die; that this was the purpose of His life. Three times before His triumphal entry into Jerusalem Jesus had prophesied about His approaching death, each time in greater detail (see Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34). During the past few days this has obviously been much on His mind. We see in the first half of this chapter that Christ refers to His sufferings a further four times. In verse 8 He makes reference to His burial which must, by necessity, follow His death. In verses 18-21 He talks of His betrayal (implying suffering) and makes reference to what was "written of Him", no doubt thinking of passages such as Isaiah 53. Then in verses 22-25, in instituting the Lord's Supper, He makes mention of His shed blood and His broken body which again clearly imply His forthcoming death. While in verses 27-28 He refers to the striking of the Shepherd and scattering of the sheep prophesied in Zechariah 13:7, again an intimation of His death.

However the clearest demonstration of His great anguish is given in the words of verse 34. So great was the conflict within Him as He considers the prospect of His suffering and death that it appears He might almost fall down dead even here in the garden. Indeed, Luke's more graphic account tells us that His sweat was as drops of blood and an angel was sent to strengthen Him (Luke 22:43-44). It was as though the Father were saying to His Son, "this is not the time nor the place to die". Yet such was Jesus' anguish, such was the burden He bore as He thought of the sufferings and death He must endure, that it almost overwhelmed Him and angels had to be sent to enable Him to continue with His mission.

Can we comprehend what this meant to Him? Here He cries out to His Father as One who carries the sorrows of innumerable souls. What a cup had been assigned Him to drink! Such great suffering: even the wrath of Almighty God against sin. And the suffering had already begun in the heart and mind, if not the body, of the incarnate Creator. Jesus, the God-man, the substitute for sinners, the only hope for mankind, kneels in the garden and a battle is raging in His heart and mind: His humanity balks at the prospect which lies before Him. No wonder He cries, "Take this cup away from me".

"Scarcely for a righteous man will one die..." Those are the words of the Apostle Paul (Romans 5:7). Yet Christ was to die, not for the righteous, but sinners - and the

worst of sinners at that! Christ was to deflect the wrath of God from sinners onto Himself, He was to bear their punishment in their place, He was to redeem their corrupt and sinful lives with His perfect, sinless life.

Sinners. Enemies of God. Those who couldn't care less about the Almighty Creator. These are the ones for whom Jesus is being asked to die. Those who hate Him. People who live their lives for themselves and give no thought to what service they owe to God. These are the people for whom Jesus is being asked to endure such great suffering.

Can we even begin to understand this?

The humble submission of the Son

Yet despite this we hear Him say, "nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will".

Oh, what a Saviour! What a Saviour is this Christ, this Jesus who we see here on His knees in great anguish. This blessed Man who submits Himself to the will of the Father. Here is a great victory being won with these words of submission. If it is true that the

Jesus' resolve to complete the work which He has begun is greater and more powerful than the quaking of His heart at the prospect of bearing the wrath of God the Father Himself.

victory of the cross was gained in Gethsemane than here with these words the victory is secured, for here is Jesus' declaration of intent.

His desire to be obedient to the Father, His will to fulfil the plan of redemption, His resolve to complete the work which He has begun is greater and more powerful than the quaking of His heart at the prospect of bearing the wrath of God the Father Himself.

Christ in His humanity defeated Satan in the wilderness immediately following His baptism. Christ in His still untainted humanity defeats the assaults of Satan in the garden of Gethsemane immediately prior to His death.

Here is the substitute for sinners. View Him on His knees in the garden. See Him return not once, but twice, with the same petition. Oh what an agony He undergoes as His humanity voices its anguish yet *refuses* to rebel, and He remains as sinless as the day He was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the virgin Mary.

What a Saviour!

Conclusion

Can you remain indifferent to the suffering of Jesus? He suffered for sinners. He was determined not to give up, but willingly submitted to the only possible way for sinners to be saved. He cried out to His Father to take that cup from Him, but only if there was some other way for sinners to be saved. There was not, and so He continued to endure that great anguish beyond the garden of Gethsemane and onto the Cross of Calvary. He endured it so that sinners might be set free from such a fate. What an amazing message!

How will you respond to the news that trust in this Saviour brings the forgiveness of all your sins? Will you trust in Him? Will you entrust yourself to Him?

And having trusted Jesus for salvation will you then live *your* life in submission to the Father's will? Will you follow the example of Jesus Christ knowing that, no matter what suffering you may be called upon to endure in this life, because Jesus suffered the full weight of God's wrath for your sins you are free from the condemnation of sin and are made an heir together with Christ of all the riches of glory?

The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many (Matthew 20:28). If you have been so ransomed you are now called to imitate Christ in submission and service that you might also reign with Him in eternal glory!

Book Reviews

Journey of Souls

C. D. Baker

Preston/Speed Publications

Hardcover 438 pages ISBN 1-88715-939-8

G&T price: \$42.95 (incl. NZ postage)

Journey of Souls is a fascinating historical novel based on the doomed Children's Crusade which took place early in the 13th century. C. D. Baker spins a bitter-sweet tale tracing the journey of one of the many groups of child Crusaders



who endured unspeakable horrors in their misguided pilgrimage from northern Europe to Jerusalem.

There, they had been assured, the power of their childhood innocence and purity would overwhelm the heathens into surrendering the Holy City. But this group of youngsters never saw that city, they left a trail of child-size graves along their route, while over the months they experienced much of the worst and little of the best of what human nature could give them. Yet this is

not only a story of human horror, but also of divine love. Surrounded as they were by evil and struggling to come to terms with the injustice so rampant in a just God's world, some of them came to realise the sinfulness rather than purity of their own hearts, and discovered the love of God for them made manifest in the sufferings of Jesus Christ. This book will interest young people and adults alike with its engrossing story while presenting historically accurate information on a period in history many of us know little about and interweaving the message of the Gospel in a thought-provoking way.

The Power of Speaking God's Word

Wilbur Ellsworth

Christian Focus Publications

Paperback 144 pages ISBN 1-85792-604-8

G&T price: \$29.95 (incl. NZ postage)

Wilbur Ellsworth's book, *The Power of Speaking God's Word*, is an interesting examination of orality: 'communication that is spoken as distinguished from communication that is written.' The author argues that orality is God's primary method of communication. The Word of God which we have in written form was, for the most part, first a spoken Word communicated by Prophets and Apostles to the people. And despite having the Bible in writing, it is preaching - spoken communication - which God has particularly chosen as the enduring method of spreading the message of salvation by grace through faith in Christ. Ellsworth's great concern is that too often the preacher's preparation is better suited to written than to spoken communication and therefore the preaching suffers. He calls for a change of approach in preparation and preaching to one which recognises that preaching is an oral rather than literary exercise. This book should be studied by every preacher who is committed to the effective communication of the Gospel.

A Voice in the Dark

The story of Richard Wurmbrand

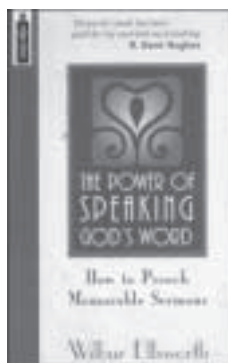
Catherine MacKenzie

Christian Focus Publications

Paperback 187 pages ISBN 1-85792-298-0

G&T price: \$14.95 (incl. NZ postage)

Richard Wurmbrand has just recently died after many years faithfully serving the Lord and His people. This small biography, written for young people, traces the period of Richard Wurmbrand's life from his first imprisonment in Romania in February 1948 through to his final release and emigration to the USA in 1965. It is a rather simplistic account of those tortuous years, but it does manage to convey some of the horror Wurmbrand underwent, the injustice of his experiences, and his enduring faith and love for God. It would be particularly suited to older children or young teens and would certainly give them an idea of what life was like for Christians living under communism. Unfortunately, the book presents the gospel with an Arminian emphasis which may be of concern to some parents.



All the books reviewed here are available from Grace & Truth Publications. See page 30 for contact details.

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JOHN QUINCY ADAMS (1825-1881) was initially a paedobaptist and then became a convinced baptist and pastor of a church in New Jersey, USA. He is not to be confused with the 6th President of the USA, who shared his name but not his theology, being a Unitarian!

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The articles in this magazine reflect the body of biblical doctrine summarised in the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith. Contributors are allowed reasonable freedom in the exposition of those truths; the editors do not necessarily endorse every view expressed.

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Cover Picture

The old Stone Store at Kerikeri in the Bay of Islands,
the heartland of early missionary activity in New Zealand