

Editorial

I love the book of Nehemiah. For years this man has been an inspiration to me. His dedication to the service of God is second to none. Every Christian should aspire to be like him. Among other things, Nehemiah needed great discernment. I believe the question he asks in 6:3 (“Why should the work cease?”) helped guide him through the various attacks he endured as he led the work of rebuilding Jerusalem’s city wall.

The enemies of the Jews accused them of rebellion against the King of Persia (ch.2). Nehemiah probably asked himself, “Why should the work cease while I go back to Shushan and argue against these false accusations before the king? Is this a sufficient reason for the work to be delayed when God Himself will prosper us?”

The enemies then tried to discourage the people by pointing out their weakness and inexperience, emphasizing the immensity of the task, and drawing attention to the poor quality of the building materials (ch.4). I imagine Nehemiah asking, “Why should the work cease while I go and find enough skilled masons and quarry new stones? Is this a good reason for the work to be delayed when the good hand of our God is upon us?”

A little later Nehemiah was informed of a conspiracy to attack the workers and force a halt to the rebuilding of the wall. Nehemiah’s precautions are a result of asking the question, “Why should the work cease while we stand guard against this attack? Is the work to be delayed when our God will fight for us?”

However, we then discovered that things were not as they should have been within the city; there was a danger that the workers would be distracted by their own people (ch.5). Again, Nehemiah’s question, “Why should the work cease as the men starve because of the greed of their own people? Is this a reason to delay the work when God has provided enough to meet all our needs?”

When we come to chapter 6. The enemies make three last ditch attempts to bring the work to a premature end. First they plan to assassinate Nehemiah. He responds to their invitation to a peace summit by asking, “Why should the work cease while I leave it and go down to you? Can you have any business with me that is more important than doing the work of God?” Then they try slanderous rumours in an attempt to weaken his resolve. He again asks, “Why should the work cease while I spend time defending my actions and clearing my name? The rumours are false and my time too precious to be wasted on them.” Finally Nehemiah’s enemies try to discredit him before the people by showing him to be a weak man and a law-breaker. Nehemiah asks, “Why should the work cease while I take refuge from my enemies in the temple? Should I flee when God has work for me? Can I break His law when I should be establishing it?”

Continued on page 32

News

1689 Baptist Confession Project

It is Mike Marshall's desire to communicate with all the Baptist Pastors/Churches in New Zealand with a copy of the 1689 Confession and an explanation in order to stimulate discussion concerning the doctrines of grace. If any would like to help in this project, please contact Mike Marshall at: 18 Rimu St, New Plymouth. Ph (06) 758-9927.
e-mail: marshalls@clear.net.nz.

NZ Reformed Baptists on the Internet <http://www.rbc.org.nz>

The internet offers contact with a potential rapidly growing audience of several hundred millions around the world. This provides a unique opportunity for the promotion of biblical truth, both to the world and churches worldwide. The New Zealand Reformed Baptist Churches website was set up in June 1999 as a site where resources of interest to our churches could be collated on the web. The site has continued to grow and expand since then and now includes:

- homepages of participating churches
- information on "What is a Reformed Baptist Church?"
- a modernised version of the 1689 Baptist Confession
- a directory of NZ Reformed Baptist churches, groups and individuals
- an extensive page of links to other sites and resources of interest to Reformed Baptists (further suggestions welcome)
- a library of materials by or about NZ Reformed Baptists

- Grace & Truth Ministries, which includes
 - Grace & Truth Publications: with an online bookshop offering material from Reformed publishers
 - Grace & Truth Magazine
 - Grace & Truth Conferences
 - Grace & Truth Youth Camps

The site also currently hosts information on the International Fellowship of Reformed Baptists.

All this makes the website one of the more comprehensive Reformed Baptist sources on the web. Please make use of and promote this valuable resource which also attracts viewers from around the world. It is difficult to ascertain exactly how many individual visits have been made to the site, however over 50,000 pages (screens) of information have been accessed in the two years since the site was set up. Any suggestions for improvement are welcome, and any offers of expertise and assistance in maintaining the site will be considered.

Errata

In the last issue of Grace & Truth Magazine we stated that Karen Pollard, a member of Grace Baptist Church in Christchurch, is the secretary for the Christian Heritage Party. She is, in fact, the Personal Assistant to Graham Capill, the leader of the party.

We also indicated that Marchwiël Reformed Baptist Church in Timaru had formally adopted the 1689 Baptist Confession in December 1998. However, that date marks the induction of John Leever as pastor of the church. The church had moved to a

The Hamilton Easter Convention

A REPORT BY MIKE & JEANNE MARSHALL

The 7th Hamilton Easter Convention was held from the 13th to the 15th of April, 2001, at The Reformed Church of Hamilton, being co-hosted as usual by the Trinity Reformed Baptist Church. The speaker was David Jones from the Crossroads Presbyterian Church in Hobart, Tasmania.

David Jones originally comes from Wales. He trained at the Presbyterian College in Aberystwyth. His first pastorate was in Wales. From there he went to Grove Chapel, Camberwell, in England. Then he was called to the St John's Presbyterian Church in Hobart, Tasmania. After an 8 year period of ministry there, he was set aside to develop a new work. It is from this situation that he came to share with us from the first book of Peter.

At the conference David spoke on 5 occasions, covering the first book of Peter. The topics he dealt with were as follows: 'The Christian's True Identity', 'The Church as it is Meant to be', 'Life in a Goldfish Bowl', 'Making a Drama out of a Crisis' and 'Something for Everyone'. He also took the Easter Sunday service at the Trinity Reformed Baptist Church in Hamilton. This message was taken from John 21 where Jesus appeared to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias. At this pre-arranged meeting Jesus restored the disciples, especially Peter, who had denied Him three times.

On the Friday and Saturday a bookstall was run by the Snowballs from Sovereign Grace Books in Auckland. As usual they had an excellent selection of Christian books at discounted prices for the occasion.

It was good to be able to attend a conference with people from varied denominations and to be encouraged from God's Word. Rich fellowship was enjoyed

News (continued)

Reformed Baptist theological position earlier in the decade under the leadership of Pastor Alfie Orr. Though it does not formally subscribe to the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith the church is in agreement with it and, we understand, they are currently discussing its inclusion in the church's Constitution.

The editors apologise for any confusion caused by these inaccuracies.

I will praise You, O Lord,
with my whole heart;
I will tell of all Your
marvelous works.
I will be glad and rejoice in You; I
will sing praise to Your name,
O Most High.

Psalm 9:1-2

by God's people who love the truths of His Word. The conference attendants were united by the common desire to be built up and to be encouraged by good speakers who are faithful to God's Word and the Gospel.

David Jones challenged not only the Church as a whole but also each individual Christian in his daily walk with the Lord. He reminded the listeners that all are as unique as snowflakes and that God has a special plan for each person. He emphasised the importance of loving God above all things. He compared our witness to the world to that of a goldfish in a bowl. Just like the goldfish's every move is viewed by onlookers, the Christian's every move is witnessed by the world. Because of this, the Christian's life must be holy and reflect Christ.

Those interested in purchasing audio tapes should contact
Trinity Reformed Baptist Church, c/- 8 Odette Street, Hamilton.
e-mail: trbc@rbc.org.nz

A video tape is presently available on a loan basis. Contact Mike Marshall
18 Rimu Street, New Plymouth. e-mail: marshalls@clear.net.nz

Fellowship & Study Day

A REPORT BY STEPHEN SMITH

The Fellowship & Study Day was initially begun in 1998 as a bi-annual meeting for mutual fellowship and Christian teaching. It grew out of discussions between Grace Baptist Church, Christchurch, and Marchwiell Reformed Baptist Church, Timaru, about the possibility of a combined church camp. It was finally agreed that a day conference would be more practical. Due to its similarly small size and reformed theological position, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Ashburton was invited to participate. Ashburton was chosen as the venue because of its central location between Christchurch and Timaru. By 1999 the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Christchurch was also involved.

There are normally three study sessions at each meeting. Visiting speakers have been used on the past two occasions, but the norm is for three of the four pastors of the participating churches to take the sessions, with the fourth pastor having a 'day off'. The first session is usually a lecture in Theology or Doctrine, the second is a lecture in Church History or a biographical sketch, while the third and final session is a preaching meeting. A children's programme for those under the age of thirteen runs concurrently

with the study sessions, and a selection of good Christian books is made available by Grace & Truth Publications.

Our most recent fellowship day was held on Saturday 28th April and the speaker was Linleigh Roberts. Linleigh is the interim pastor of the Ashburton congregation of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church. He has spent much time in ministry amongst the Presbyterian Churches in Australia, has visited New Zealand on occasions in the past, and heads the Biblical Foundations ministry in the USA.

How to Study the Bible

Linleigh addressed the topic of the importance of Bible study and gave some guidelines on how to do it. He started with the premise that the Bible is the infallible, inerrant word of God. Because it is the word of God and is reliable, it speaks to us with certainty. In a day and age when standards are lowered and when many Christians are theologically illiterate it is essential that we study God's word to learn its truths and apply them to our hearts.

The people at the conference were encouraged in the second session, to consider meaning and interpretation. We need to determine what the author has in mind. Therefore we must not read any preconceived ideas into the passage.

We also considered the question of whether the Bible is the word of God? The Bible claims to be the word of God and God is the author. It contains no error and speaks with authority. There is a supernatural element here. The Bible is also the word of man - it was written by man and speaks about humanity and life issues. In this regard, like the person of Christ, the Bible is both divine and human.

There are a number of approaches that have been used in an attempt to study the Bible. These include:

1. The mystical and allegorical approaches. It is assumed there is some magical or mystical meaning behind the text.
2. Inner light. This is an experience centred approach to the word consistent with Charismatic theology. People sit around and expect a word to come to them.
3. Rationalism. This is where reason and mind are extolled to the extent of ignoring supernatural revelation. As Berkhof puts it "When the chill winds of Rationalism swept over Europe, natural revelation was exalted at the expense of supernatural revelation. Man became intoxicated with a sense of his own ability and goodness, refused to listen and submit to the voice of authority that spoke to him in scripture, and reposed complete trust in the ability of human reason to lead him out of... error into the clear atmosphere of true knowledge".¹

4. The Neo-Orthodox approach. Neo-orthodox theologians (e.g. Barth) claimed they were going back to the Bible. However they re-defined doctrinal terms. Thus words like sin and the sovereignty of God lost their historic meaning.

In contrast to these false approaches Linleigh suggests that the biblical approach consists of two aspects: The Laws of the Spirit and the Laws of Language.

The Laws of the Spirit mean that the Spirit of God will guide the true believer. There has to be a sincere desire to be taught by the Spirit to know the mind of God. The Spirit teaches in response to prayer 1 Cor 2:9-11; Eph 1:15ff; 3:14ff etc. Prayer and a close walk with the Lord are essential.

Linleigh did not deal at length on the Laws of language. However, he pointed out that we need to consider what was the purpose of the author, outline the argument of the passage and consider grammar, words and figures of speech.

In the final session, Linleigh gave us a “taste” of redemptive history and demonstrated how the covenant of grace flows through the book of Genesis and through the rest of the scriptures. A correct study of the book of Genesis is essential if we are to understand how redemptive history flows throughout the scriptures.

Prior to the final hymn, the children presented an item that they had prepared during the children’s programme.

Some final comments

The study of the doctrine of the Bible is an important subject and it is worthwhile doing some private study on this area.²

Having recently appreciated the excellent teaching at the Hamilton Easter Convention [see report by Mike & Jeanne Marshall elsewhere in this issue], I believe conferences such as these provide a good forum for fellowship and teaching. There is a blessing in hearing the word of God. Thus I would encourage all Reformed people in Canterbury to support the Fellowship & Study Day: all visitors are welcome regardless of church affiliation! Attendance has generally been low but those who have come have been greatly blessed by the teaching and the fellowship of like-minded believers.

Notes:

1. Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, (Banner of Truth, 1998), p.38.

2. I recommend Brian Edwards’ excellent book *Nothing but the Truth* (Evangelical Press). Also check out the links page on the New Zealand Reformed Baptist Churches website - <http://www.rbc.org.nz>

Augustine of Hippo

An Introduction to his Life
and the significance of his controversy with the Pelagians

DAFYDD HUGHES

The man who would one day be called the greatest of all the Church Fathers was born on 13 November 354 in Numidia, a province of North Africa, in what is now Algeria. The man was Augustine, otherwise known as Augustine of Hippo after the town in which he spent the greater part of his adult life. Augustine's father was a pagan while his mother was a devout Christian who sought to influence her son right up until her death in about 387 AD. Augustine received a good education and could easily have advanced to a position as a lawyer or civil servant but for his father's death in 370. Instead, still only sixteen, he was forced to become a teacher to help support the family. It was about this time that he began living with a mistress who later bore him a son. While still in his teens, Augustin moved to Carthage to study and then to teach rhetoric. Here he was influenced by the writings of Cicero, a pagan philosopher who had lived in the first century BC, and soon after he became an ardent follower of Manichaeism.¹

In 384, aged thirty, Augustine moved to Milan in Italy to take up the position of professor of rhetoric having spent some time in Rome as a teacher. It was in Milan that he discovered the philosophy of Neoplatonism, a reinterpretation of the philosophy of Plato by Plotinus:² At this time he also came under the influence of Ambrose, then Bishop of Milan. Ambrose was an able preacher and hymnwriter. He made the Christian faith seem intelligible and reasonable, and Augustine could not but be impressed with his powerful preaching.

However, the conflict between the search for truth and his promiscuous lifestyle still raged. He had put away his mistress of fourteen years in favour of a proper marriage arranged by his mother, Monica, but since the girl to whom he was now betrothed was not old enough for actual marriage, he continued to live a life of worldly and sexual gratification. It was in 386, two years after moving to Milan, that the Lord, in a remarkable way, convicted him of his sin and brought him to faith in Christ:

Monica prayed ceaselessly for her erring son. For long it seemed as if her prayers were not heard, and that all her entreaties, admonitions and instructions were lost upon him.

It must have been a great encouragement to her much-trying faith when a good bishop living near her North Africa home assured her that a son of so many prayers and tears could not be finally lost. This comforted Monica and in due time the bishop's words proved true....

At the age of thirty-one Augustine was sitting in a garden in Milan, weeping and calling to God for deliverance from sin. He despaired of himself. Suddenly he heard the voice of a boy or girl from a neighbouring house repeating in a kind of chant, "Take and read; take and read". Without delay he took up the New Testament, and read Romans 13:13-14, the first words on which his eyes fell: 'Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ and make not provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof'. Almost at once every shadow of doubt melted away. There and then Augustine passed from death to life. Immediately he went to tell his mother what had happened. She was close at hand for she had followed him to Italy. Her mourning now turned into joy, and she blessed the Lord who was able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that she had asked or thought.³

Augustine's son was converted soon after his father and they were both baptised by Ambrose on Easter Sunday 387. Later that year Augustine's mother died and just two years later, shortly after their return to Africa, Augustine's son also died, at just eighteen years of age.

Following his conversion Augustine lived a monastic type life-style. He devoted much time to study and writing and became known for his formidable attacks against the enemies of the church. Yet his life was to change dramatically once more:

In 391, while he was visiting the Catholic church at Hippo, west of Carthage, the overwhelming popular demand of the congregation forced a reluctant Augustine to accept ordination as presbyter. The elderly bishop of Hippo, Valerius, was a Greek who could not speak Latin very well, and had been praying for a suitable assistant for years; when he noticed Augustine standing in his congregation, he began preaching on this very topic - and the congregation surrounded Augustine, crying out that here was the man Valerius needed. Augustine submitted with tears, interpreting the will of the people as the voice of God. So began Augustine's 40 year association with Hippo (present-day Annaba in Algeria). In 396, Valerius died and Augustine succeeded him as bishop.⁴

Augustine remained Bishop of Hippo for 34 years until his death in 430 AD, aged 76.

Pelagianism

From 390, shortly before he became presbyter and later Bishop in Hippo, until his death in 430, Augustine wrote many works including his autobiography, the famous *Confessions*. He devoted his immense intellectual talents to dealing with various heresies in the Church. He refuted Manichaeism, in which as a follower he had wasted nine years of his life. He also attacked Donatism, a splinter group from the established church which had flourished particularly in North Africa until Augustine gave it a death-blow in his writings.⁵ However, his influence was probably nowhere more powerfully or lastingly felt than in his controversy with the Pelagians.

Pelagius, from who Pelagianism derives its name, was a British monk who moved to Rome in the 380s AD. "Pelagius appears to have been a man of blameless moral character, and of considerable learning and force... [his writings] exerted much influence on the theological thinking of that period."⁶ As he moved and taught amongst the nobility of Rome, Pelagius gathered around him a body of faithful followers, one of whom was a bright young lawyer named Coelestius. The two men went to Hippo in 410 fleeing the Visigothic invasion of Italy.⁷ Failing to meet Augustine there as they had hoped they settled in Carthage. However, Pelagius stayed only a year before moving to Palestine.

Pelagius rejected the concept of original sin and the notion that Adam's sin affected the whole of humanity; "Man, he claimed, is not born sinful, but is able to do all that God requires of him, if he only wills to do so... the ability to be saved is found in the lost sinner's heart if he will but use it."⁸ It was Coelestius who took up this teaching and developed it, and it was because of this that Coelestius was refused ordination as a presbyter at Carthage in 411. Augustine summarised the teachings of Pelagius:

*The teachings
of Pelagianism
struck at the
very basis of
true Christian
salvation.*

Then follow statements alleged against Pelagius, which are said to be found in the teaching of Coelestius, his disciple;

- i. Adam was created mortal, and he would have died, whether he sinned or not.
- ii. Adam's sin injured himself alone, not the human race.
- iii. The Law, as well as the Gospel, leads to the Kingdom.
- iv. There were men without sin before Christ's coming.
- v. New-born infants are in the same condition as Adam before the Fall.
- vi. It is not through the death or the fall of Adam that the whole human race dies, nor through the resurrection of Christ that the whole human race rises again.⁹

This summary was never denied by Coelestius. In 418, due to the disturbances these teachings were causing among the Christians at Rome and under pressure from Augustine and the other leaders of the African church, Zosimus, then Bishop of Rome, “approved the African position, which had been restated by a council at Carthage (418). From this point on, Rome stood firmly against the Pelagian party.”¹⁰ However, Julian, Bishop of Eclanum, soon became an ardent spokesman for Pelagianism, “combining argument, ridicule, and personal attack [against Augustine] ...and evoked from him uncharacteristically bitter replies.”¹¹ This debate was brought to an abrupt end with the death of Augustine in 430. The council of Ephesus officially condemned Pelagianism the following year.

The Controversy

Augustine had not been present at the local synod in Carthage which had originally condemned Coelestius in 411. The other African bishops focussed their attention on the relationship between the Pelagian views and the subject of infant baptism. By this time in the church's history it was generally believed that baptism was necessary for salvation; Pelagian doctrine meant baptism was unnecessary, and this is what was of primary concern to the church in general. However, when Augustine became involved in the debate he saw deeper problems and, as Battenhouse explains,

...he laboured to move as quickly as possible beyond the discussion of the validity of infant baptism to the underlying issues: These issues are two. In the order of their importance for Augustine, they are the fact and the nature of the grace of God in Christ, and the fact and the role of the human will in the attainment by man of moral excellence.¹²

The Pelagian view regarding man's initial freedom from sin and corresponding lack of a need of divine grace marked a significant departure from the traditional beliefs of the Church, though it seems there had not been any defined system relating to those doctrines before this time. Augustine therefore set about clearly and carefully refuting the erroneous teachings of Pelagianism. While seeking to give no ground to error, Augustine's writings against Pelagius reveal a careful effort to be objective and fair in his judgments. As a result of this careful study Augustine was to come to the conclusion that the teachings of Pelagianism struck at the very basis of true Christian salvation.

Here, then, was an issue of utmost importance. Pelagianism was stealing from God the glory which was due to Him alone because it denied man's need of divine grace,

claiming that man could save himself. It stemmed from a complete rejection of the significance of the Fall beyond Adam's immediate and personal state before God.

In tackling these serious denials Augustine had to grapple with the subject of original sin. While the Pelagians taught that man was born free from sin and with the ability not to sin, Augustine concluded that all human beings are implicated in Adam's sin. As sinners he maintained that we have lost the ability to do what is right and he argued that God's grace is absolutely essential.

Pelagius taught "that a man can be without sin, if he choose."¹³ Augustine responded to this teaching in the writings of Coelestius:

"First of all," says Celestius, "if someone denies human ability to live a sinless life, we must ask him what sin is in all its forms. Can this sin be avoided? Or is it unavoidable? If it is unavoidable, then it is not sin. If it can be avoided, then a person can live without the sin that can be avoided. Reason and justice prevent us from calling something 'sin' if it cannot in any way be avoided."

The Triumph of Grace

Augustine's writings on Salvation

by N. R. Needham

Augustine (354-430), bishop of Hippo in Algeria, was the greatest theologian of the Western Church in the age of the early Church fathers. Few if any of the fathers combined Augustine's profound personal experience of God's saving grace in Jesus Christ with his intellectual brilliance at expounding the theological meaning of that grace. The bishop of Hippo's spiritual influence proved to be enduring, living on through the centuries as a constant source of challenge and renewal to a Church that was always in danger of falling from grace back into works.

Augustine's legacy reached new heights of influence in the 16th century, when the Protestant Reformers called the Church to return, not only to the Bible, but also to Augustine and his theology of grace. Martin Luther, John Calvin and their reforming colleagues were steeped in the writings of Augustine, as were the Puritans and their successors.

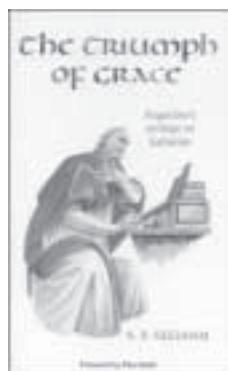
This book brings together choice quotations from Augustine on the theme of salvation. Here readers can sample for themselves what one of the masterminds of Christianity had to say about creation, the fall, original sin, free will, law and grace, incarnation and atonement, the new life in Christ, predestination, and the perseverance of the saints. It is a profound, radical and vital message that today's Church desperately needs to hear again if she is to recover her spiritual and theological health.

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Our answer to this is as follows: sin *can* be avoided if our corrupted nature is healed by God's grace through our Lord Jesus Christ. For the degree that our nature is not sound, to that degree it fails to see on account of blindness, or fails to accomplish on account of weakness, what it ought to do. "For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh," so that a person does not do the things he wishes (Galatians 5:17).¹⁴

Again Augustine argued:

A man's free choice avails only to lead him to sin, if the way of truth be hidden from him. And when it is plain to him what he should do and to what he should aspire, even then, unless he feel delight and love therein, he does not perform his duty, nor undertake it, nor attain to the good life. But to the end that we may feel this affection 'the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts' not 'through the free choice which springs within ourselves,' but 'through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us' (Romans 4:5).¹⁵

As Augustine worked through the implications of original sin and man's inability to help himself without God first intervening, he explained what is called *Prevenient Grace* - predisposing the heart to seek God:

If, as I prefer to think in your case, you agree with us in supposing that we are doing our duty in praying to God, as our custom is, for them that refuse to believe, that they may be willing to believe, and for those who resist and oppose his law and doctrine that they may believe and follow it. If you agree with us in thinking that we are doing our duty in giving thanks to God, as is our custom, for such people when they have been converted... then you are surely bound to admit that the wills of men are *prevented* [i.e. 'started' or 'set going'] by the grace of God, and that it is God who makes them to will the good which they refused; for it is God whom we ask so to do, and we know that it is meet and right to give thanks to him for so doing...¹⁶

From this Augustine also argued for the doctrine of Predestination:

Let us, then, understand the calling by which the elect become elected - not those who are elected *because* they have believed, but elected *in order that* they may believe. For the Lord Himself also sufficiently explains this calling when He says, "You did not choose Me, but I chose you" (John 15:16). For if they had been elected because they had believed, they themselves would certainly have first chosen Him by believing in Him, so that they would deserve to be elected. But He takes away this notion altogether when

He says, "You did not choose Me, but I chose you." And yet they themselves undoubtedly did choose Him when they believed in Him. Therefore the true reason that He says, "You did not choose Me, but I chose you," was because they did not first choose Him in order that He should then choose them, but He first chose them in order that they might then choose Him. For His mercy went before them according to grace, not according to debt. Therefore He chose them out of the world while He was wearing flesh, but as those who were already chosen in Himself before the creation of the world.

This is the changeless truth concerning predestination and grace. For what is it that the apostle says, "As He has chosen us in Himself before the creation of the world" (Ephesians 1:4)? And assuredly, if this was said because God *foreknew* that they would believe, not because He Himself would *make* them believers, the Son speaks against any

The very errors which Augustine was fighting in the fifth century... have their advocates in the twenty-first century.

such foreknowledge when He says, "You did not choose Me, but I chose you." For God should rather have foreknown this very thing, that they themselves would have chosen Him, so that they might then deserve to be chosen by Him. Therefore they were elected before the creation of the world with that predestination in which God foreknew what *He Himself* would do; but they were elected out of the world with that calling by which God fulfilled what He predestined. For whom He predestined, them He also called, with that calling which is according to purpose. Not others, therefore, but those whom He predestined, them He also called; not others, but those whom He called, them He also justified; not others, but those whom He predestined, called, and justified, them He also glorified, assuredly to that end which has no end.¹⁷

The Church accepted Augustine's arguments for the absolute necessity of divine grace in salvation and rejected Pelagianism in 418 (condemning it officially in 431 as we have already noted). However, Augustinianism in its fullness was not accepted, the doctrines of irresistible grace and predestination being stumbling blocks to the Church.

In working through these doctrines Augustine developed a theology of grace founded upon the Scriptures. Charles Hodge stated,

If the office of the theologian, as is so generally admitted, be to take the facts of Scripture as the man of science does those of nature, and found upon them his doctrines, instead of deducing his doctrines from the principles or primary truths of his philosophy, it seems impossible to resist the conclusion that the doctrine of Augustine is the doctrine of the Bible.¹⁸

The significance of the controversy

In drawing attention to the departure of the Pelagian system from the traditional teaching of the Church, Augustine formulated for the first time a 'theology of grace'. He dealt with each of the doctrines now sometimes referred to as the Five Points of Calvinism. In doing so he "was the first [Church Father] to develop rather definite ideas of sanctification,"¹⁹ and "the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints was first explicitly taught by [him]."²⁰

It is difficult to imagine what would have happened, humanly speaking, if Augustine had never been saved, or had directed his efforts in some completely different direction:

During the eleven hundred years which elapsed from the time of Augustine to that of Luther, all the best of the schoolmen, all the great missionary movements, the revivals of true religion, the extension of popular education, and all the great healthy political reforms, had their common inspiration in Augustinian theology...²¹

During the period from the fifth century to the Reformation era of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, Augustine's theology found a number of supporters: John Wycliffe and John Huss being among the better known. The Reformation itself drew heavily on Augustine's writings; both Martin Luther and John Calvin openly acknowledged their debt to him, and in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* Calvin quotes extensively from Augustine's works.²² Benjamin Warfield was therefore able to write in his book on Calvin and Augustine, "when the great revival of religion which we call the Reformation came... it was, on its theological side, a revival of Augustinianism..."²³

Since the Reformation Augustinianism, being so much one with Reformed theology, has been left in the background while reference is often made to the latter. However, the significance of Augustine's controversy with the Palagians lives on in the names of Luther, Calvin and the Reformation. While we may refer, in our contemporary debates, to Reformed theology as that system which most clearly and faithfully represents the theology of the Bible regarding the doctrines of grace, these are also "those great scriptural truths which Augustine so fully unfolded and so ably defended, and which strike at the root of all the errors which have been held upon these subjects, either in ancient or in modern times, and whether in grosser or in more mitigated form."²⁴

Conclusion

Dr Lloyd-Jones, preaching in Edinburgh in 1960 in commemoration of the Reformation in Scotland, said, “the greatest battle of all, perhaps, at the moment is the battle for justification by faith only. ‘Works’ have come back!”²⁵ The very errors which Augustine was fighting in the fifth century, and which the Reformers fought in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, have their advocates in the twenty-first century. We have been warned in the scriptures that “There is nothing new under the sun. Is there anything of which it may be said, ‘See, this is new’? It has already been in ancient times before us.” (Ecclesiastes 1:9b-10).

This brief summary of Augustine’s controversy with the Pelagians demonstrates the importance of studying church history. We can save much time in contending for the truth if we know how to draw on the works of the great and godly minds of the past. In endeavouring to counter the errors that seek entrance into the contemporary church let us not waste time building defences and making weapons that have already been made. Augustine, the men of the Reformation, and others like them have set the example by pointing the way to the Scriptures which they have so ably expounded. Let us follow them to the glory of God and for the purity of His Church.

Notes:

1. “Manichaeism was a form of Gnosticism, invented by a Persian named Mani (216-77 AD). Mani called himself ‘the apostle of Jesus Christ’, and claimed he had received a new revelation which brought together all the truths of all previous religions. Deeply influenced by the Gnostic leader Marcion, Mani taught that the whole universe could be explained as a conflict between the two equal and eternal forces of Light and Darkness. Human beings must recognise that they are a mixture of these two forces, and devote their lives to purifying themselves from all Darkness. They will be helped by the agents of Light, who include Buddha... Zoraster... Jesus and Mani himself. To purify themselves, people must abstain from everything that binds them to the physical material world, such as work, property, meat-eating and marriage - like all Gnostics, Mani saw physical matter as an evil force.” N. R. Needham, *2000 Years of Christ’s Power: Part 1*, (Darlington: Evangelical Press, 1998), pp.148-149.
2. “In Plotinus’ Platonism... the source and goal of all existence is the One, which is beyond not only description but even being itself. It is accessible only by ascetic abstraction above the world of sense and even thought, culminating in rare moments of ecstatic vision in which the self is united with the One. From the Ones’s creative overflow emanates a hierarchy of levels of being.... All being as such is good, even bare matter at the lower limit of the ‘great chain of being’.... Evil is strictly non-being - a real possibility for those who turn away from the One.” Sinclair B. Ferguson & David F. Wright (eds), *New Dictionary of Theology*, (Leicester, Inter-Varsity Press, 1988), p.519.
3. S. M. Houghton, *Sketches from Church History*, (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1980), pp.24-25.
4. Needham, *2000 Years of Christ’s Power*, p.243.
5. “Named after Donatus (died 355). The Donatists refused to accept the ministry of bishop Caecilian of Carthage (appointed in 311), on the grounds that one of the bishops who ordained him had handed over the Bible to be burnt during the persecution under emperor Diocletian. Thus the Church in North-West Africa split into two rival Churches, the Catholics and the Donatists. Donatists held that moral impurity in a clergyman

The Authority of the Bible

LYNDON DRAKE

One of the principal tenets of the Reformation was *sola Scriptura* - Scripture alone. Scripture was regarded as the revelation of God's word to men, and was considered inerrant (perfect and without any mistakes), necessary (essential for true knowledge of God), and sufficient (complete and self-interpreting).

This position is obviously untenable for non-Christians, but it has also become unfashionable among many of today's professing Christians. In fact, some actively oppose the inerrancy and sufficiency of Scripture, either by claiming that the Bible is

Augustine of Hippo (continued)

rendered his ministry invalid - he could not baptise, ordain or celebrate communion. They also held that they alone were the one true Church." (Ibid., p.370). Augustine attacked the Donatists because he felt that their division from the Catholic Church was a sin against the body of Christ, and also because he believed that the validity of an ordinance was not conditional upon the purity of the instrument used by God to perform the act.

6. Milton S. Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, (Grand Rapids: Academie Books, nd), p.658.

7. The Visigoths were an alliance of Germanic tribes who had accepted Christianity in about 376 AD. Their invasion of Rome was not as enemies of Christianity but rather an attempt to acquire Roman territory for themselves and to share in the benefits of Roman civilization. See Williston Walker, *A History of the Christian Church*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992), pp.147-151.

8. Houghton, p.27.

9. H. Bettenson (ed), *Documents of the Christian Church*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), p.53, quoting Augustine's *De gestis Pelagii*.

10. Walker, p.209.

11. Ibid.

12. R. W. Battenhouse (ed), *A Companion to the Study of St. Augustine*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), p.216.

13. Bettenson, p.54.

14. N. R. Needham, *The Triumph of Grace*, (London: Grace Publications, 2000), p.70, quoting Augustine's *De Spiritu et Littera*, 4.

15. Bettenson, p.54, quoting Augustine's *De Spiritu et Littera*, 5.

16. Ibid., p.55, quoting Augustine's *Epistle ccxvii (to Vitalis)*.

17. Needham, *Triumph of Grace*, p.215, quoting Augustine *On the Predestination of the Saints*, 30.

18. Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, (Abridged edition, E. N. Gross (ed); Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988), pp.335-336.

19. Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1988), p.529.

20. Ibid., p.545.

21. A. A. Hodge, *Evangelical Theology*, (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1976), p.137.

22. See John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Trans. Battles, Ed. McNeill, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), where the 'Augustine' section of the Author and Source Index fills 8 pages or almost 20% of entries!

23. B. B. Warfield, *Calvin and Augustine*, (Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Co., 1956), p.323.

24. W. Cunningham, *Historical Theology*, (Edmonton: Still Waters Revival Books, 1991) vol.1 p.333.

25. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Knowing the Times*, (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1989), p.99.

merely a form of myth which provides moral lessons, or by using outside sources to interpret the Bible.

Two modern errors are particularly pervasive: interpreting the Bible in the context of modern culture; and allowing scientific thought to control our understanding of the Bible.

Myth and moralism

The Bible includes many moral lessons, all of which are useful for guiding the way we live. However, I believe that these moral lessons do not constitute the primary message of the Bible. The Bible's theme is salvation: as a result of our sin, each and every one of us is under God's curse, and we each require God's forgiveness to escape punishment for our sins. The Bible teaches that God's forgiveness can only be found by trusting in Jesus' death and resurrection.

If we treat the Bible as a set of moral lessons, we can quite easily interpret it as a type of myth. Myths are not necessarily truth in themselves; myths contain a message of truth. To those who interpret the Bible as myth, the question of whether a particular portion of the Bible is factually accurate becomes irrelevant, because a myth is valuable only for the message it teaches - it does not have to be true. Myths are also open to reinterpretation in the light of changes in cultural or scientific belief.

The Bible's view of itself

This view of the Bible as a form of myth stands in stark contrast with both the Bible's own claims, and the orthodox belief of Christians. 2 Peter 1:21 says, "prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God" (cf. 2 Timothy 3:16). Throughout the Bible, the doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture is clearly presented - there is no suggestion in the New Testament, for example, that the Old Testament was a set of carefully fabricated fables.

Jesus and the New Testament writers quote the Old Testament books as authoritative sources, and this is particularly clear towards the end of 2 Peter 3, where in verses 5 to 7 Peter comments on those who doubt Christ's promise to return: "But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water. By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgement and destruction of ungodly men." Peter bases his trust in Christ's promise on the factual accuracy of the history given in Genesis.

If we believe that the Bible is inspired by God, then it is not open to reinterpretation

from any outside source. God is the ultimate authority, and when he speaks all other authorities must submit to his word.

Cultural context sensitivity

There are a number of areas in which the Bible's instructions about how we should live have become unpopular. This is not a new phenomenon - if people naturally behaved in the way the Bible instructs, the Bible's instructions would not be necessary.

For example, some people are offended by evangelism, and consider it poor manners for Christians (or those from other evangelistic religions) to attempt to convince people to change their beliefs. This belief is so common in some circles, for example, that missionaries are regarded as the soldiers of cultural imperialism.

Numerous other examples of modern cultural reinterpretation could be found (some of them extremely controversial): the ordination of women, the acceptance and even promotion of sexual promiscuity and homosexuality among Christians, and the style of worship used in churches.

A problem arises when we try to reinterpret the Bible in the light of modern culture. Modern cultural norms suggest that it is wrong for Christians to evangelise, while the Bible contains clear instructions telling all Christians that it is their responsibility to evangelise. Are we to say, because we consider modern culture to be superior to the culture in which the New Testament writers lived, that we should adjust our understanding of the Bible? To do so ignores the fact that God inspired the Bible. The Bible is God's word, not merely the collected writings of some enlightened religious scholars. God gave us these instructions knowing that we would be reading them today, and chose to give instructions that he still expects to be obeyed today.

Science and miracles

Current scientific thought often conflicts with or even contradicts the Bible. For example, the gospels state that Jesus was conceived by Mary while she was still a virgin. The virgin birth is not possible naturally - it is an example of a miracle. In his providence, God generally "sustain[s] all things through his powerful word" (Hebrews 1:3) in what we perceive as the normal course of events. Miracles occur when God alters the normal way in which he acts. However, miracles do not fit in with conventional science, which has defined the "Laws of Nature", and claims that these laws describe all possible events.

This leads to a fundamental disagreement between science, which claims to explain the physical world, and the Bible, which describes a number of events that cannot be

explained by science. Other miraculous events described in the Bible include the resurrections of several people (including Jesus himself), many accounts of sick people being instantly healed, and the description of the creation of the world given at the very beginning of the Bible.

There are two ways of interpreting these miracles: by assuming that the Bible is accurate (and that miracles are outside the realm of science), or by reinterpreting the Bible in the light of science. Reinterpreting the Bible forces us to treat the miracles as mythical fables, while accepting the inerrancy of the Bible requires us to reject some of the claims of modern science.

Why it matters: the Gospel

One reason why this is so important is the Bible's claim that Jesus rose from the dead. The resurrection of Jesus is central to the gospel - without the resurrection, salvation would not be possible. You may think it acceptable to believe that some of the miracles actually happened (e.g. Jesus' resurrection), and that others did not happen or occurred somewhat differently from the way they are described in the Bible (e.g. the creation of the world). This poses a difficulty, however, because if the Bible's record of some of the miracles is inaccurate, other parts of the Bible might also be. If you do not believe the account of the creation of the world and the fall of man into sin (given in Genesis chapters one to three), then there is no particular reason why you should believe an account given in the same Bible of Jesus' resurrection. Do not fall into the trap of attempting to select which parts of the Bible to believe in.

The other trap to avoid is that of treating the Bible as a type of Christian Aesop's Fables, where people can learn lessons about how to live from the interesting stories found inside. The Bible can indeed teach us valuable moral lessons, but it has a far more important message: the gospel account of Christ's sacrifice for sin. The gospel calls us each to personally believe that Jesus did come into the world, live, die, and rise again, in exactly the way the Bible describes.

How we regard the Bible has a profound impact on our eternal souls. The old call to rely on Scripture alone is in danger of being lost, with the result that the message of the gospel is sometimes obscured or even completely ignored. We need to regain a correct attitude towards the Bible, reflecting the attitude we should hold towards the Bible's author. We need to trust what is written in the Bible, because it is what God has written to us.

*This article first appeared in Christis, the religious magazine
of York University in England.*

The Spirituality of Christ's Kingdom

JOHN QUINCY ADAMS

“My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36)

There was much misapprehension, during the ministry of Christ on the earth, concerning the nature of that kingdom which he was about to establish. It was most generally supposed, that it would be a temporal kingdom, differing from others only in its superior external splendour, its brilliant warlike achievements, and its universal extent. It was this false idea that so perplexed Herod, at the announcement of the birth of the infant Saviour. It was this false idea that led the Jews to reject their Messiah, when he appeared among them in the character of the meek and lowly One. It was this false idea that led the disciples, just before the ascension of Christ, to ask, “Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?”

The principles to which the Saviour gave utterance, were calculated to remove these false impressions from the minds of all who had imbibed them. He taught his followers to cherish a spirit of self-denial, and humility, and peace. Every act of his life, and every word of his lips, bore testimony to the fact that he came not to set up an earthly empire, but a spiritual kingdom; and when he uttered the words of the text, “My kingdom is not of this world,” he simply gave an exposition of the principles he had been teaching during his life.

When the apostles were enlightened by the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, they understood perfectly the nature of this declaration; and hence, they admitted none to visible membership in the gospel kingdom but those who gave evidence of repentance, and faith in Christ. They taught that the church of which Jesus is the Head, was a spiritual organization, composed not of those who came into it by hereditary descent, but of those who were born of the Spirit. But there has been a departure from these principles; and organizations now exist, under the designation of Christian churches, which aim to unite the church and the world, and introduce the impious, and ungodly, and profane, into Christ's kingdom - thus reversing his declaration, that his “kingdom is not of this world.” Against this innovation Baptists strenuously protest. We announce, then, as the Second Feature of the reform in which Baptists are engaged,

The Restoration of the Spirituality of Christ's kingdom.

Let us inquire here, How is it, that the principle expressed in the text came to be

violated? How does it happen, that others than those possessing the qualifications demanded by the Gospel, come to have a place in Christ's professedly visible kingdom? How comes it to pass, that what is professedly Christ's church, is the receptacle of the godless and the vile?' I reply, simply through the introduction of the unscriptural rite of infant baptism. So long as the church followed the direction of her Lord, and baptized into her membership only those who gave evidence of faith, so long she retained her spirituality; but when she permitted tradition to add to the Word of God, and received into her membership infants, who grew up in sin and unbelief, then her spirituality was exchanged for worldliness - then she introduced a traitor into the citadel, who betrayed her into the hands of her enemies. In contending, then, for the baptism of believers only, we aim at the restoration of the principle expressed by the Saviour in the words of the text: "My kingdom is not of this world." I shall endeavour to show,

1. *That Infant Baptism tends to the Violation of this Principle.*

It is an undeniable fact, that all Paedobaptist churches have contended that infants are proper subjects for membership in the church, and therefore should be baptized. There are two opinions, however, as to the grounds of infant baptism. Some contend that the infants of professed believers should be baptized because they are already members of the church, by their natural birth, while others contend that they should be baptized in

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order to make them members. All Paedobaptists, however, agree, that infants are proper subjects for church membership, and by baptism they receive such to their membership. This is true, not only of the Church of Rome, but of all the Protestant Paedobaptist denominations, as can easily be shown by their Confessions of Faith and writings on the subject.

The Episcopal minister, at the baptism of an infant, says: "We receive this child into the congregation of Christ's flock." And again: "Seeing that this child is regenerate, and grafted into the body of Christ's church." And in the prayer he thanks God that it hath pleased him "to regenerate this infant, and incorporate him into his holy church."¹ M. E. Church Discipline, Art. XVII, says: "Baptism is not only a sign of profession, and mark of difference, whereby Christians are distinguished from others

that are not baptized, but it is also a sign of regeneration, or the new birth. The baptism of young children is to be retained in the church." The Presbyterian Confession of Faith says: "The visible church consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, together with their children."² We are told again, that "Baptism is a sacrament... whereby the parties baptized are solemnly admitted into the visible church."³ "All baptized persons are members of the church, are under its care, and subject to its government and discipline, and *when they have arrived at years of discretion*, they are bound to perform all the duties of church members."⁴

This is the doctrine of all Paedobaptist denominations. Those baptized in infancy are considered as sustaining the relation of members. The propriety of this relation is urged in every possible way. Says one writer, "Infants may be the disciples of Christ. A disciple is a scholar; this is the meaning of the word. And a child is a scholar before he learns his lesson, as well as afterwards. He is reckoned a scholar when he is committed to the care of the instructor, or has his name put down with those who belong to the school whether he puts his name down himself, or whether his parents put it down for him. The church is the school of Christ. The names of all those to whom God's gracious covenant [baptism] is applied, belong upon the records of the church."⁵ Here it is plainly taught that infants, by their baptism, are not only admitted into the church, but actually made disciples of Christ. Surely, Mr. Arnold had forgotten what Christ said, when he wrote the above: "If any man will be MY disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." However, I did not introduce this extract to combat it in this place, but simply to show that Paedobaptists contend for infant membership.

Another writer says: "This relation of children to the church is generally represented, by the most respectable authors, as *infant membership*. Against this I can see no valid objections. In a very important, though in a very qualified sense, baptized children may be considered as infant members of the Christian church."⁶

Says Dr. McDowell: "By baptism children become members of Christ's visible church." He says again, "Children by baptism, are brought under the watch-care of the church, and become the subjects of its wholesome discipline."⁷

From these quotations, (and they might be increased indefinitely,) it will be clearly seen that infants become members of Paedobaptist churches by baptism; and these infants are the constituent elements of which these churches are composed. Having thus been admitted members in infancy, they retain their connection with the church after they are grown up, however vicious and abandoned they may become. Though they are sometimes guilty of such vile crimes as to merit their exclusion from society, and their confinement in the penitentiary, still they are not excluded from the church; and though they sometimes die under the hand of the public executioner, without any evidence of repentance, they die as members of the church into which they were

baptized. Is not this uniting the church and the world “until death doth them part?”

Although these remarks apply, more particularly, to national churches - all of which are Paedobaptist - as the Romish, Greek, Lutheran and English Episcopal, who all receive and retain infant members, however vicious they may become, yet the same is true, in some sense, of all other Paedobaptist churches. Dr. Woods, speaking of the duty of the church to its infant members, says:

On the question whether the church ever ought, by a public act, to cut off those who give evidence of obstinate impiety, there have been various opinions.... It is, in my view, utterly inexpedient to attempt to fix upon any particular age, at which those who were baptized in infancy, and who exhibit no evidence of piety, are to be abandoned by the church, as those for whom no farther efforts are to be made. For, suppose you fix upon the age of eighteen, or twenty, or twenty-one; who can be sure that a youth at that age though without any evidence of regeneration, may not be in a state of mind which is more susceptible of good impressions, and which affords more hope of salvation, than at any period of his life before? Now if any person should be in this state, and the church should adopt a principle like what I have referred to, they must forthwith exclude such

Special Children?

A theology of childhood

by Eric Lane

This is a book for Christian parents who want to know what the Bible has to say about their children. Are they different from other children? Are they different from the children of the old covenant? Are they sinful? If so, when did this begin? Are they morally responsible and, if so, from what age? Can they be converted and, if so, how early can this be looked for? How do we go about bringing them to faith? What happens if they die before that happens or, even worse, before they are capable of being told the Gospel?

What about their upbringing, such things as discipline and punishment? Do we have to put them through a different form of education from non-Christians? What place do they have in our local church? Should we have them dedicated? May they be baptised while still children? Become members? Attend the Lord's Supper? What responsibility do church leaders have to them? Should they have separate meetings?

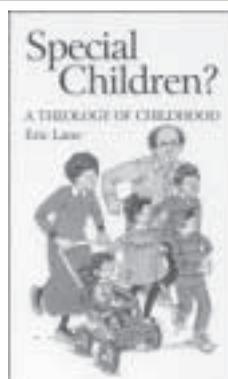
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a person from all the advantages of their Christian friendship; and they must do this at a time when those advantages would be most highly prized.... We are not to attend to present appearances; but are to consider the forbearance and longsuffering of God, and the multiplied instances in which His grace has visited those who had long lived in sin, and who, in human apprehension, had been fitted for destruction. And when those who have been devoted to God in baptism, wander far and long from the path of duty, and show fearful symptoms of obduracy, we are not quickly to despair of their salvation, but are to follow them with every effort which the sincerest love can dictate. And when no other effort seems to promise any good, we are to abound in prayer, relying on the infinite grace of God, and earnestly hoping that our prayers will prevail and that our children will at length be persuaded to consider their ways, and turn to the Lord.⁸

From this it will be perceived that those who are made members of Paedobaptist churches in infancy continue such when grown up - that they are not to be excluded no matter how ungodly they become, so long as hopes may be entertained of their conversion; or, in other words, so long as they live. This, we know, is the practice of Paedobaptists universally. Is not this uniting the church and the world?⁹

Now let it be remembered, that I have thus far confined my remarks to the effects of infant membership where only the children of professedly pious parents are admitted into the church by their baptism in infancy. How much more palpable does this evil appear, when we extend our observation to the practice - which exists, to a, greater or less extent, in almost every Paedobaptist community - of baptizing the children of unconverted parents. The majority of Paedobaptists do not require piety as a condition in the parents, but simply a desire to have their children christened. There is nothing in the standards of any Paedobaptist church that actually prohibits the baptism of children of unconverted parents. The Presbyterian Confession of Faith appears to prescribe limits, but it does not actually do so, nor is it so understood by the ministry of that church. Says Dr. McDowell, "Seeing that a person by baptism has become a member of the visible church, although destitute of piety, and although he gives the church no evidence of visible piety, yet on what ground, or in what way can he be kept back from baptism for his child? I answer, let him be seriously and solemnly told the nature of baptism.... If this were properly done, it would have a great effect in keeping back many improper persons."¹⁰ I might, if it were necessary, furnish instances where Presbyterian ministers have baptized the children of unconverted parents without the least hesitation. But the worst feature of all is, that in some cases unconverted persons are urged to bring their children to baptism. Suppose, however, that in all cases, none but the children of truly pious parents were admitted to infant baptism and membership - would this remove the evil? Are such children any better than others? No; for like all

others, they are born with carnal and depraved natures. They are of the world - they belong to it; and notwithstanding their religious parentage, they are "children of wrath even as others," until regenerated by the Holy Spirit. As they advance toward maturity, they exhibit the same enmity to God, and the same evil passions, and the same sinful inclinations manifested by others. Some of them become notoriously vile; yet they are not to be excluded; but they retain their membership, into which they were brought in their infancy, and continue in it to the day of their death.

Now this is directly opposed to Christ's declaration: "My kingdom is not of this world." It is directly opposed to the practice of the apostles. It is directly opposed to the New Testament description of church members. They are there described as a spiritual seed, lively stones, saints, sincere believers. But are baptized infants of this description? Do they possess the qualities which in the New Testament are invariably ascribed to church members? By no means. And yet they are received into what are professedly evangelical churches; and thus the spirituality of Christ's kingdom has been destroyed by infant baptism. "The church of Christ, bought with his blood, and ordained by him to be the fold of his sheep, the home of the renewed, in the world but not of it, has been robbed of its true design, by being converted into a common receptacle for the pure and the impure - a great drag-net, inclosing all alike."

Infant baptism tends directly to amalgamate the church with the world. It is by means of this, that the church of Rome has spread her baneful influence over so many nations. This is abundantly evident from the fact, that through the christening of children she has made whole nations nominally Christian, teaching just what all other churches who baptize infants teach, that by their baptism they are made members of the church of Christ. Thus do Protestant Paedobaptists indorse the false teachings of Rome. I proceed to show

2. That the practice of Baptists is in accordance with the teachings of Christ.

Baptists regard the kingdom of Christ as a purely spiritual organization, separate and distinct from the world. Acting upon this conviction, they admit none to baptism and membership, but such as profess their faith in Jesus, and give satisfactory evidence that they have "passed from death unto life." They recognize no hereditary claims to the covenant of grace. They claim no "holiness" for their off-spring, arising from their natural birth, which entitles them to a place in God's spiritual temple; but regarding them as carnal, depraved and unholy, they constantly feel the importance of urging upon them their own personal obligations to "repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ;" while infant damnation has no place in their creed, for the simple reason that, like infant baptism, its supposed antidote, it is not found in the Bible. They aim to

show that Christ's "kingdom is not of this world." They receive none but professed converts, and when these walk disorderly, they withdraw themselves from them. They are laboring to reform both Protestant and Papal Christendom on this point, which they regard of vital importance to the best interests of the church and the world. Let their principles prevail, and there can be no unhallowed union of Church and State, no amalgamation of Christ's kingdom with the world; but the Church, with undimmed lustre will shine forth, her glory unobscured, her ordinances uncorrupted, and her membership uncontaminated, and instead of being "the mistress of the State, or the courtesan of the world - as paedobaptism has in too many instances made her - she will appear in all her loveliness as the Bride of Christ!"

From these remarks it will be seen, that infant baptism is not that harmless, innocent thing which many suppose it to be; but the parent of gigantic evils; the fruitful source of the existence of state churches, and most of the corruptions flowing therefrom; the instigator of all the persecutions which have ever been waged in the name of Christianity; a lying refuge and hiding-place of falsehood to ensnare and ruin souls; in short, the originator and propagator of Popery.

Infant baptism is an error from beginning to end - corrupt in theory and corrupting in practice; born in superstition, cradled in fear, nursed in ignorance, supported by fraud, and spread by force. With a tyrant hand it has shed the blood of martyrs in torrents in all lands. The introduction of infant baptism was the death-knell of religious liberty in the Christian communities where it was practiced. The first persecutions ever raised in the name of Christianity, were waged by the advocates of infant baptism against those who, adhering to the teachings of Christ and the apostles, denied its validity. The council of Carthage (A.D. 414) passed the following canon: "We will that whosoever denies that little children by baptism are freed from perdition and eternally saved, that they be accursed." The edict of Honorius and Valentinian III (A.D. 413) forbids rebaptism throughout the Roman empire under the penalty of death. This of course was aimed at those who considered infant baptism as unscriptural, and immersed believers after they had confessed their faith in Christ, even though they had been baptized in infancy. Justinian, in the beginning of the sixth century, ordered new-born infants to be

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baptized, under a penalty for neglecting it. Under laws like these, enforced as they were in the middle ages with new and most sanguinary edicts in all the states of Europe, what multitudes must have become martyrs, may be conjectured from the fact that at the time of the Reformation Baptist martyrs were counted by tens and even hundreds of thousands.

Now, as we love the Word of God, the commands and example of Christ, the purity of the Christian Church, and the souls of men, we are bound unceasingly to labor for the extermination of this monster evil, this child of Tradition! In seeking to effect this reform, we shall use no carnal weapons, but simply adhere to the word of God, the precepts of Christ, and the practice of the apostles, and urge all others to do the same.

You perceive again, that while we differ from most other evangelical bodies merely as to an external ordinance, apparently, here is another great principle involved in that difference. Let me urge all to seek from the Bible a knowledge of the characteristics of those who composed the primitive churches, and see whether they will apply to the constituents of Paedobaptist churches. And if not, then "come out from among them," and aid those who are laboring to effect a reform which will restore the spirituality of the church, and clothe it with that moral beauty and attractiveness of which paedobaptism has shorn it. If you do this, and are proselyted, you will have proselyted yourselves; and such are the only kind of proselytes Baptists can make.

In concluding this lecture, I cannot refrain from saying a few words to those who have been baptized in infancy, and are yet conscious that they have never been "born again." I am induced to do this, because I am reminded that my attention was first led to a candid investigation of the subject of baptism, by discovering that, though unconverted, I was a member of the church, - having been made so by my baptism in infancy. This incongruous position you sustain. Though in the world, and of the world, you are also in the church, and of the church! You are not responsible, I am aware, for the inconsistency of the position you occupy. You were brought into it while in unconscious infancy, without your knowledge and consent. But, I inquire, do you not feel that such a relation is perfectly inconsistent with your own ideas of what the Bible teaches? A moment's reflection, I feel confident, if you are really Protestants, will convince you of it. At all events, I urge you, as Protestants, to search the Bible in reference to this matter, with the hope that you may be led, as I was, to see your unfitness for a place in Christ's kingdom, and to seek and obtain salvation through Jesus Christ, and then act consistently, by uniting with those who aim to restore the spirituality of Christ's church, by faithfully adhering to his own declaration; - "My kingdom is not of this world."

Notes for this article will be found on page 32

Feed My Sheep

A REVIEW ARTICLE BY CHRIS GOOD

The church scene in New Zealand in recent decades is one that displays increasing desperation. Census and other statistics show an ongoing persistent decline in adherence and attendance, especially amongst the young. In response to this, many churches grasp at the scores of straws offered as the key to revival to reverse the trend: Alpha Courses; seeker services; market analyses; Toronto Blessing; entertainment evangelism; 'alternative' worship; etc, etc, etc. None seem to work - and the young continue to go, now often followed by older members disillusioned with the changes and feeling spiritually starved and neglected in the new youth oriented approach. Never have the churches worked so hard at being relevant and 'seeker-focused'. Never before have churches been so marginalized, or the disillusionment with them been so widespread - many of our fellow Kiwis viewing them as irrelevant institutions of a bygone era. As the situation worsens, churches become more vulnerable to the next trend promoted as the key to revival, all the time failing to turn to the one true, great hope for revival - the proclamation of the Gospel, which "...is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes" (Romans 1:16)

It is into this context that John Haverland writes with what is in effect a call to a new Reformation - a recovery of confidence in clear, expository, relevant and heart-felt proclamation of the Word of God.

The book has 3 major parts:

Part 1: The Necessity of Preaching

A defence of preaching against the many criticisms levelled against it (such as that it is irrelevant and ineffective in a multimedia age, etc.). Haverland responds with a biblical and historical case for the priority and effectiveness of preaching, showing that the church has been at her best when preaching has been central. He is careful to distinguish between shallow sermonets and topical ramblings that many today mistake for true biblical preaching that seeks to proclaim the message of the text itself. Preaching is relevant because it deals with eternal issues that affect people's lives. It is effective because God has promised to use it, and its authority challenges all cultures and philosophies to submit to it. A challenge is also issued for preachers to preach with their lives as well as their words.

Part 2: Understanding Our New Zealand Context

This section consists of a historical survey of church history, with a special emphasis on the impact of rationalistic modernism, and then anti-rational postmodernism on New Zealand churches. Haverland shows that New Zealand at best was a largely nominally 'Christian' society, then increasingly overtly secular. The latter has led to the abandonment of historically recognised Judeo-Christian values and the result is the social and moral decay we see today as the ethical centre uniting society has disappeared. Replacing it is a plurality of competing values and 'truths', leading to scepticism about any claims concerning ultimate Truth, increasing fragmentation and tribalizing of society, consumerism, etc.

Part 3: Preaching the Gospel in Our Postmodern New Zealand Situation

Harveland's solution is for churches to prophetically proclaim a counter-cultural approach to Postmodernism. Over against the view that all religions are valid - preach the uniqueness of Jesus as Lord and Saviour. Against all truths being equal and subjective - preach the reality of God and the Truth of the Bible. Against relativism in morals - preach the absolutes of God's unchanging moral Law. Against the pessimism and meaninglessness of Postmodernism, proclaim the living contentment and everlasting hope of Biblical Christianity. Against tribalism preach the unity of all races, classes and sexes in Christ and His Church. Along with all this is to be the practical and positive witness of selfless mutual love expressed through the church.

This book is a timely wake up call to churches in New Zealand. If we are to see genuine culture-changing revival - we first must see the recovery of the priority of the proclamation of the gospel as the central mission of our churches.

This book is highly recommended for all church leaders, and for all Christians concerned about the future of Christianity in New Zealand.

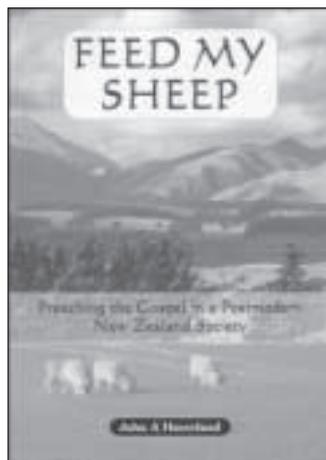
Feed My Sheep by John Haverland

Grace & Truth Publications

Paperback 314 pages ISBN 0-9582145-1-4

G&T price: \$26.95 (incl. NZ postage)

(see page 32 for publisher's contact details)



Kids'
Corner

Using Time Wisely

Dear Readers,

A few weeks ago a reporter on the news was talking about how much time people spend each day doing different things like sleeping, eating, washing, reading, watching TV, working or playing.

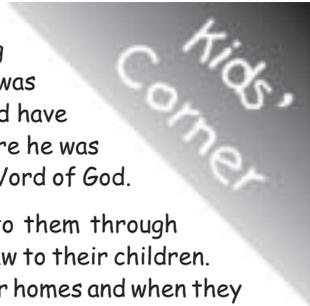
As I was thinking about this I was reminded that the Apostle Paul wrote that we are to redeem the time (Ephesians 5:16 and Colossians 4:5). The word 'redeem' means 'to buy back'. Of course, once time has passed it is impossible to buy it back, even if you have a million dollars! If you waste an hour lounging around, that hour has gone for ever. Some Bible translations put it like this: "make the most of every opportunity". What Paul meant was that we are to make the best use of our time.

Do you know the English proverb, "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy"? That's worth remembering, because making good use of our time doesn't mean that we need always to be working. I love the description of Jerusalem that the prophet Zechariah gave as he encouraged the people to work hard to finish rebuilding the city (it had been destroyed when the Jews were taken into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar - you can read about that in 2 Kings 24-25). Zechariah tells us that God said: "the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in its streets" (Zechariah 8:5). I'm sure you like to play, so you'll be pleased to know that God's idea of a happy place is where boys and girls can play in safety.

Jesus was once left by mistake in Jerusalem when he was twelve years old (see Luke 2:41-50). His parents thought he was playing with his cousins and friends, but this time he was talking to the teachers in the temple. The thing is, we know that when he was a boy Jesus liked to play because this is what his parents thought he was doing on the way home from Jerusalem. So it wasn't unusual for Jesus to play as a boy. Using our time wisely will include time for play. That is how God wants it.

But it would not be a wise use of time if we were always playing. It is very important to spend time learning. We need to learn how to take care of ourselves; how to work so that we can have food and clothes and a place to live. Paul said in one of his letters, "If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat" (2 Thessalonians 3:10). It is very important, while we are young, to spend time learning so that when we are older we will be able to work.

There is something even more important that we should do with our time. Think again about Jesus being left in Jerusalem. He wasn't playing this time, he was learning. But he wasn't learning how to work. He would have been taught by Joseph how to be a carpenter, but here he was learning from the teachers at the temple about the Word of God.



After the Israelites left Egypt and God spoke to them through Moses, He told the people that they must teach His law to their children. They were to talk about it as they sat together in their homes and when they were travelling from place to place, and they were to begin and end each day learning about God and His ways (Deuteronomy 6:7). It is very important that we spend time each day learning about God. This is using time wisely.

For you to do!

Ecclesiastes 3:1 tells us there is a time for everything. In verses 2-8 it goes on to give 28 examples. Can you find them in the wordsearch below (use NKJV or NIV Bibles). Do you know when it might be right to hate or even to kill?

B	S	T	E	A	R	D	O	W	N	K	I	P	L
T	P	L	M	B	U	I	L	D	U	P	T	E	O
H	E	N	B	Q	R	O	B	K	I	L	L	A	T
R	A	U	R	M	Y	G	I	V	E	U	P	C	M
O	K	C	A	S	T	A	W	A	Y	C	L	E	O
W	G	J	C	C	D	I	E	W	K	K	A	D	U
A	A	R	E	A	M	N	K	B	O	R	N	A	R
W	T	H	L	T	G	W	E	E	P	W	T	N	N
A	H	A	O	T	K	I	E	S	E	A	R	C	H
Y	E	T	S	E	W	N	P	I	U	R	A	E	E
T	R	E	F	R	A	I	N	L	A	U	G	H	A
I	A	L	O	V	E	X	M	E	N	D	Y	S	L
B	R	E	A	K	D	O	W	N	F	U	A	D	O
C	F	I	U	P	R	O	O	T	E	A	R	X	S
L	O	R	K	E	E	P	S	I	L	E	N	C	E

Finally, if we are going to use our time wisely, we must worship God with His people. We know that Jesus went to the synagogue on the Sabbath (Luke 4:16); that is like us going to church on Sunday. In Hebrews we are reminded to gather together to help and encourage one another in the things of God (Hebrews 10:25).

You cannot worship God unless you have first had all your sins removed (Hebrews 11:6; Psalm 24:3-5). So the most important thing, the very wisest thing that you can do with your time is to ask God to forgive your sins as you trust in Jesus to take the punishment that you deserve.

With best wishes,

Dafydd

Editorial (continued)

Despite the machinations of his enemies Nehemiah resolved to continue what he had gone to Jerusalem to do. Nothing was more important to him than obeying the Lord through building the wall. Here then is a question for us; a question which will help us to examine our priorities and one which will help us to avoid distractions: "Why should the work cease while I do this, that or the other? ...is this action going to make me more like Christ? is that activity going to increase love and unity in the church? is doing the other going to make my witness to the lost more effective?"

May the enemy of souls fail in his attempts to distract us, may we never cease serving Christ in buliding holy lives and churches for His glory and praise.

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The Spirituality of Christ's Kingdom (Notes)

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. *Ministration of baptism of infants.*
2. *Westminster Confession, chap.xxv, sec.2.*
3. *Larger Catechism, question 165.*
4. *Discipline of the Presbyterian church in the United States, chap.i, sec.7.*
5. Samuel Arnold, *Discourse on the Proper subjects of Christian Baptism*, pp.10-11.
6. Rev. Dr. Woods, *Lectures on Infant Baptism*, p.170.
7. McDowell, *Theology*, vol.ii, pp.493-494.
8. Woods, *Lectures...*, pp.173-175.
9. Editorial note: It needs to be remembered that the author was writing at a time when Paedobaptist State churches were still dominant. The fact that since then many Paedobaptists have moved closer to a Baptist approach to church purity in practice is to be welcomed. However, even today all non-State Paedobaptist churches continue to recognise and maintain an infant (i.e. non-professing) membership. They differ from the state churches not in this practice, but in that they generally require a credible profession of faith before allowing people to move into communicant membership and they maintain discipline for these communicant members.
10. McDowell, *Theology*, vol.ii, p.484.

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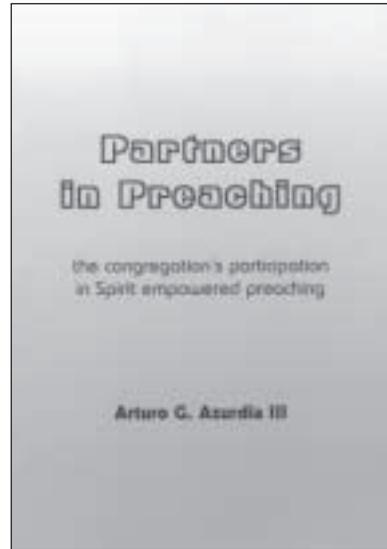
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When was the last time the preaching warmed your heart?

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In this booklet Arturo Azurdia contends that there is a connection between the way members of the congregation live their lives, the regularity and earnestness of their prayers for the preaching, and the power and effectiveness of the preaching they hear. He urges Christians to live more careful, prayerful lives so that the Spirit's work might not be hindered and the 'word of the Lord may spread rapidly and be glorified'.

Arturo G. Azurdia III is the pastor-teacher of Christ Community Church in Cordelia, California, and is the author of Spirit Empowered Preaching.

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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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Images from the first Grace & Truth Youth Camp
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