

Editorial

The events of 11th September 2001 do not need any description here, I'm sure. The tragedy of thousands of lives lost in the space of minutes has stunned the whole world and confronted the USA in particular with the vulnerability of even a 'super-power'. In the aftermath of the terrorist strikes on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, it is not only the families of those who lost loved ones who are suffering. Thousands of families have lost their livelihoods throughout the States and beyond as airlines have shed jobs, while many other businesses have also been affected. The New Zealand tourist industry is bracing itself for a tougher future, while Air New Zealand's already bleak future has become shrouded in uncertainty and debate.

However, the events in the USA have repercussions beyond the immediate loss of life or livelihood. Many people have been confronted with the fragility and uncertainty of life and there is an increased openness to talking about God, particularly in the West. Yet in places like Central Asia, where Islam dominates, there is increased danger for Christians living and working in an already difficult environment. The following is a letter from a field leader to his fellow workers which may provide readers with a somewhat different perspective on the events that have dominated international media.

Dear Friends and Fellow-workers,

We are moved to write to you to encourage you in this time of uncertainty and confusion. The events of this last week will have repercussions here in Central Asia that will only become clear with time. For sure the events in Washington and New York are only the beginning of the story.

In I Peter 3:14-15 we read the following exhortation:

Do not fear what they fear, and do not be intimidated, but in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an account of the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and reverence.

'Horror' gripped us all as we watched the television pictures and heard the radio or read from the Internet just what had occurred. An act of violence and evil had struck right at the heart of American political and business life. But that wound is a global wound and the pain will be felt all over the world. So far we have heard only voices of sympathy and expressions of grief from our neighbours and friends here, but as one scans through the short wave channels on the radio there are other voices to be heard, which come from many quarters and are crying out for more blood to be shed. The verbal escalation of violence is only a pre-cursor to physical

acts of violence. As speculation and rumour takes the place of fact and information, we must not allow ourselves to fear what they fear. All of us have fear, of course, but we must deposit it in the right safe place. Our lives here must be characterised by a fear of God, which means that we have nothing else to fear (Psalm 34:9).

Our Lord is in control and nothing that has happened or is about to happen will take Him by surprise, so let us not be seized by fear nor be paralysed by anxiety. In our hearts let Him reign in peace. Let every thought and emotion be taken captive to Him and let our speech and conversation be marked not by the futile passions of those who do not know Christ, but by the Spirit of Holiness.

'Hope' is a hard thing to find at present. The pundits and prophets of doom are already talking of war. Rumours of war are very disturbing to the soul. But we have a hope that stands eternal and whatever happens here or elsewhere, this is our 'anchor for the soul' (Hebrews 6:19). Christ in us, the hope of glory. We came here as ambassadors of this hope and not as representatives of our own countries. The problem will be that we shall often be asked to give an account of our own countries' foreign policies, rather than the hope that is within us. How then can we bring the peace and light of the glorious gospel of Christ into conversations that may possibly turn into aggressive arguments? May I suggest three things:

1. Be known as men and women of prayer
2. Be known as men and women of peace
3. Be known as men and women of the book

Pray with your friends for peace, open the scriptures with your friends, have no hesitation in letting scripture be on your lips. 'In so far as it depends upon us, let us live in peace with everyone' (Romans 12:18). We have an eternal hope in Jesus Christ and this is what we give an account of. If for this life only we have hoped, we are of all men most to be pitied.

'Honour' is the way and the manner in which we should do this. In some versions it says 'with gentleness and respect', 'with gentleness and reverence' or 'with meekness and fear'.

In all our conversations and interactions with local people let these two words characterise our speech and conduct. It is all too easy to fall into an attitude in which we feel that we have to justify the political postures of our home nations, but let us not forget that our hope comes from our God who has graciously justified sinners like us. Yesterday I received just such a lesson from a taxi driver, who told me that it was in a time of personal tragedy that he called out to God and God became very close to him. He gave his own testimony in a very warm and gentle and heartfelt manner. Let us likewise give an account of the hope that is within us.

News

Tamaki Reformed Baptist Fellowship, Auckland

A group of believers have for some months been meeting in homes in the eastern suburbs of Auckland for Bible study on Sunday evenings. Steps have now been taken to meet more formally under the above name. The group meet for worship on the 2nd and 4th Sundays each month at Carey College, 21 Domain Road, Panmure at 10:30am. They also continue to meet for Bible study every Sunday evening and have a further monthly outreach at an old people's home, and a monthly youth Bible study which attracts youngsters from a number of churches. Michael Drake and Owen Griffiths are involved in leading this new fellowship, twenty-eight years after they did similar work establishing the Sovereign Grace Church in the Mt. Wellington area of Auckland. It is the prayer of those involved that the Lord will bless the work and that it may soon be established as an active Reformed Baptist church in the community of Tamaki. Details of the fellowship can be found in the Directory on the Reformed Baptist Churches' web site: <http://www.rbc.org.nz> or you may contact Owen Griffiths (09 528 8700) or Michael Drake (09 570 5873).

Emmanuel Church, Auckland

It is with thankfulness to the Lord that we are able to report on the work at Emmanuel Church. He has sustained the church for 27 years and we count it a joy to be his servants.

In April 2001 the Church organized a Vacation Bible School for 5 to 12 year old children. This was held over three days. Each day about 40 children attended and God's word was taught to these young ones some of

whom came from non-Christian families in the neighbourhood.

So far this year the Church has conducted two baptismal services at Okahu Bay along the Auckland waterfront. Each time we were joined by the Avondale Christian Bible Church (Pastor Philip Giles). These combined baptismal services have been a great encouragement. At one of these services over 100 persons attended.

In June we commemorated our 27th anniversary. It was good to have Pastor Dafydd Hughes of Grace Baptist Church, Christchurch, as our guest speaker. He spoke from 1 Samuel 7 and reminded us of the significance of 'Ebenezer' - "Thus far the Lord has helped us."

Emmanuel Church is working with Shalom Church and Shalom Dover Church in Singapore in the translation of *Biblical Christianity* into the Khmer language. *Biblical Christianity* is the Grace Publications abridgement of part of Calvin's *Institutes*. It is a thrill to see this work near completion and soon to be made available to the people of Cambodia.

Nelly van Acker, a beloved member of Emmanuel Church working in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, has been largely instrumental in getting this translation work done. Nelly is due back for a brief stay in late October. We look forward to seeing her again.

As a congregation we have now been meeting in our own premises for over 2 years. We can testify to the Lord's wonderful provision of our hall. It is planned to extend the building in the near future.

We look forward to the November 2001 combined conference with guest speaker Erroll Hulse. These annual combined conferences are an opportunity to fellowship with brothers and sisters from other churches and have been such a blessing to us.

On December 15th we shall have our annual Christmas dinner. This year, for the first time, it will be a combined dinner and sport's evening. Food and sports is a good mix for bringing people together! It will be an opportunity to reach out to non-Christians and to share the message of Christ's birth.

The Emmanuel Church greets all *Grace & Truth* readers. May the Lord's peace and power rest on us all.

Trinity Reformed Baptist Church, Hamilton

The Hamilton Easter Convention was well attended with about one hundred people at each session to hear David Jones from Cross Roads Presbyterian Church in Hobart, Tasmania, preaching from 1 Peter.

A young man named Rikki, who had no church background, has begun attending morning services every week. Rikki heard about Trinity through listening to our radio programme 'Sound Words' which is broadcast every Sunday morning over the local Community Radio Station. Please pray for his conversion.

Rev. Linleigh Roberts spent a very profitable weekend with us in June. He preached at two services and spoke twice to the senior Bible Class on the theme, 'Developing a Christian World View.' Lin also addressed the Hamilton Reformed Ministers' Fraternal on 'The Structure of the New Testament.'

Many of the church's adults enjoyed a 'Mystery Night' which turned out to be an evening of pre-school activities run by the teenagers. A number of folk showed great potential at colouring and playdough, but as might have been expected there were several with severe behavioural problems, such as throwing playdough and calling out in class.

Trinity remains committed to systematic, expository preaching. David is currently preaching through the books of Philipians in

the morning services and Esther at night. David spoke at an Evangelical Ministries Trust conference in Melbourne in July and will be returning to Victoria for two more conferences in October.

The Church has now finished the renovation of its new buildings and is seeking to develop its outreach ministries.

Grace Theological College and Grace Bible Churches

Grace Theological College now has a web site with information about the college together with useful resources. It can be viewed at <http://www.gtc.ac.nz>. A group of evangelical and reformed presbyterian churches are responsible in large part for the establishment of Grace Theological College. These churches have been working for a number of years towards an association of churches subscribing to the Westminster Confession of Faith. This new grouping which currently consists of six churches, is known as the Grace Bible Churches of New Zealand. The name should not be confused with Grace Baptist Church in Christchurch, which subscribes to the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith [see page 12 for an introduction to this Confession and its connection with the Westminster Confession]. The Grace Bible Churches have a web site which can be viewed at <http://www.gbcnz.org.nz>.

New York Radio Broadcasts

Christopher Arnzen is a member of Grace Reformed Baptist Church of Long Island, New York, and the senior Marketing Representative for two major Christian Radio stations in New York. Christopher writes, "In light of the recent horrific tragedy that has struck our nation, and New York in particular, one of my clients, Dan Buttafuoco, Attorney at Law and President of the South Shore Christian

School's Board of Directors, wants to bless WMCA's & WWDJ's listening audiences with pastoral words of encouragement, edification and exhortation from men of God in the ministry. In order to do this, Brother Dan has purchased thousands of dollars in air time in order to broadcast 2-minute messages that will air daily, Sunday through Saturday, for months to come, if not longer." Pastors from America and around the world have been invited to contribute short messages. We encourage our readers to pray for this project.

1689 Confession project

Readers will remember that in an earlier issue of this magazine reference was made to a project to distribute copies of the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith to General Baptist churches around New Zealand. 240 copies of the Confession have now been sent out under the banner of Grace & Truth Ministries. We acknowledge with gratitude the assistance of various people in supplying and sending these booklets. Please pray that the Confession will have an impact on the lives and ministries of many pastors in our land.

New Tribes Mission hostages

Some of our readers may recall the poem by Dora Tenenoff in the *Kid's Corner* of the first issue of this magazine. Dora is the teenage

daughter of New Tribes Missionary Rick Tenenoff who, along with two other missionaries, was kidnaped by guerrillas in Colombia in January 1993. In her poem, Dora says of her father:

*He's now just a memory
slowly fading away.
"Dead or alive?" you ask,
"I don't know," I say.*

News has now reached us that Rick, Mark and Dave have not survived. Dan Germann was field chairman of NTM in Colombia at the time of the kidnaping, and has been part of the crisis team since then. He reports, "Since 1996 the picture has been confusing. Had they been killed, or were they still waiting in a guerrilla camp? Slowly the story has emerged of a military attack and the ensuing fatal shots from the captors' guns." The words of a guerrilla who once guarded the men were spoken to Dan with emphatic finality: "They are dead".

Meanwhile, Martin and Gracia Burnham, who were kidnaped in the Philippines on 27 May 2001, are reported to be healthy and doing well, though still in captivity. NTM report, "recent terrorist attacks in the USA lend more urgency to efforts to free all those held hostage, including Martin and Gracia. We are urging the US and Philippine governments to expedite their actions, with due caution."

Source: NTM New Zealand, *Prayer & Praise*, October 2001

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P.O. Box 8979, Christchurch
Tel: (03) 327 3368 Fax: (03) 327 3369
e-mail: sales@graceandtruth.rbc.org.nz
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The Equality of Christ's Disciples

JOHN QUINCY ADAMS

“One is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren.”
(Matthew 23:8)

One of the most inveterate sins of fallen humanity, is pride. Man thirsts for power. He loves to be elevated above his fellows, and to occupy a position of acknowledged superiority. He delights to be clothed with a little brief authority, which will enable him to look on all around him as his inferiors. It is the working of this spirit of arrogance and assumption that has created so many grades among men, both in the world and in the church. The disciples of Christ were infected with this spirit. They had imbibed it from the Jewish elders - the Scribes and Pharisees. They thirsted for the possession of such a degree of power and authority, as would entitle them to dictate to and rule over their brethren. Hence, we find them frequently disputing who should be the greatest. Christ invariably rebuked this spirit on every occasion of its manifestation. He taught them humility. He showed them that the principles of his gospel were opposed to all such sentiments of pride, and that instead of favouring the arrogant wishes of depraved humanity, it was designed to convert mankind into a universal brotherhood, all possessing equal rights, acknowledging but one Head, one Superior, one Master, even himself. He taught that his church was to be an association of brethren, all its members subject to one law, and all amenable to one tribunal, the voice of the church.

But how sadly has the teaching of Christ on this subject been perverted; and the professedly Christian church, instead of presenting to us the beautiful picture of a band of brethren, meeting together on the broad platform of equality, exhibits an array of gradations in authority, which vies with the most despotic governments of the world. Priestly arrogance and ministerial assumption of authority are exhibited on almost every hand, in both the Protestant and Papal churches; and from the class-leader to the mitred bishop - from the ruling elder to the triple-crowned Pope - there is a violation of Christ's declaration: “One is your master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren.” Reform here is needed; and I announce, therefore, as the *Fourth Feature* of the reform at which Baptists aim,

The Establishment of the Equality of Christ's Disciples.

I. It will devolve on me to show, in the first place, that such equality does not generally exist. In Romish and Protestant churches there is no recognition of equality among professed disciples of Christ. I suppose I need not stop to prove this assertion in reference to Romanism. All acknowledge that there are grades of power, both temporal and ecclesiastical, in that church. Even her most devoted adherents will not deny it. On the contrary, they admit and defend it.

Let us, then, turn to the Protestant churches. And first we will notice the Episcopal. Does this church recognize equality among her members? We reply, No! She has distinct and separate grades; and not only is the ministry above the laity, but there are three grades in the ministry: deacons, priests and bishops. In England, the bishops of this church, by virtue of their office, are clothed with temporal power. They are peers of the realm - that is, nobles of the land. The archbishop of Canterbury has the appointment of all the bishops, and is the highest nobleman of England. The archbishops hold authority over all the bishops. The bishops hold authority over all the churches, and inferior clergy, in their respective dioceses. They appoint ministers to their charges; they suspend, degrade, and excommunicate them. In America there are no archbishops. But the bishops, though possessing no civil power, have the same ecclesiastical power as those in England. The church has no voice in her government. In the Triennial Convention, the bishops form a separate house distinct and superior to the clergy and laity. The appropriate language of the bishops in England would be: "One is our Master, the archbishop, and all we are lords;" while both in England and America there is no recognition of the equality taught by Christ.

But let us look again at the Presbyterian church. Does equality reign here? Do all her members stand on the broad even platform of the Gospel? Can they say, "One is our Master, even Christ?" Let them answer for themselves. Both in their Confession of Faith and Form of Government, we find that the government rests not in the hands of the church, but in the session, presbytery, synod and General Assembly. These bodies attend to all the business of the church. An individual church has no power to act in the reception of members, the exclusion of members, the calling or dismissing of a pastor, or any other act of government which Christ has committed to his church. Other masters are recognized besides him.

The whole tendency of Presbyterian church government is to exalt the ministry in their authority above the church. Indeed, the ministry belong to a different order. They do not belong to the church as the other members do; they belong to the Presbytery. The church can not discipline a minister; neither can the session try him; but the presbytery must do it. Lest these assertions should startle any who have never examined the subject, permit me to give a few quotations from printed documents. The Westminster Confession says: "The Lord Jesus, as king and head of his church, has

therein appointed a government in the hand of church-officers. To these officers, the keys of the kingdom of heaven are committed, by virtue whereof they have power, respectively, to retain and remit sins, to shut that kingdom against the impenitent, both by the word and censures, and to open it unto penitent sinners as occasion shall require.”¹ These officers we are told, by the Form of Government, are “Bishops or pastors, ruling elders and deacons.” The same Form of Government gives us the character of all the different bodies composed by these officers, for the government of the church. “The church session consists of the pastor or pastors, and ruling elders of a particular congregation;” and “it is expedient, at every meeting of the session, that there be a presiding minister. When, therefore, a church is without a pastor, the moderator of the session shall be either the minister appointed by the presbytery for that purpose, or one invited by the session.” Again, we are told that among other things “it is the duty of the session to receive members into the church, or exclude from the church those who deserve it, and to appoint delegates to the higher judicatories of the church.”² The church cannot act in receiving her own members. The session attends to this for her. A majority of the members of the church might be opposed to the reception of an individual, but if the session receive him, he is admitted. On the other hand, a person may fall under the censure of the session, and, though all the church beside may esteem him a Christian, the session has power to exclude and excommunicate him. Is this equality? This is more fully exhibited in the Directory for Worship. We are told that when baptized children “come to years of discretion, if they be free from scandal, appear sober and steady, and to have sufficient knowledge to discern the Lord’s body, they ought to be informed it is their duty and privilege to come to the Lord’s Supper. The years of discretion in young Christians cannot be precisely fixed. This must be left to the prudence of the eldership.

In the Baptist denomination. . . each church, in its collective capacity, transacts its own business, exercises its own discipline, and receives and excludes its own members, subject only to the authority of Christ, and governed only by his Word.

The officers of the church are the judges of the qualifications of those to be admitted to sealing ordinances; and of the time when it is proper to admit young Christians to them.”³ It is here implied that the church, that is, the inferior members of it, as distinct from the session, is not possessed of sufficient prudence to judge of the qualifications of those who are to be admitted to the Lord’s table with them.

But further, the Presbytery has power over the session and the church. By this body the rights of the church to call and dismiss a pastor are taken away. When a Presbyterian church calls a pastor, the call is not made to him, but to the Presbytery. "The call shall be presented to the Presbytery under whose care the person called shall be; that, if the Presbytery think it expedient to present the call to him, it may be accordingly presented; and no minister or candidate shall receive a call, but through the hands of a Presbytery."⁴ So, also, the minister himself is subject, not to the church, but to the Presbytery. He can not move without the permission of this body. "No pastor shall be translated from one church to another, nor shall he receive any call for that purpose, but by the permission of the Presbytery." "The Presbytery, on the whole view of the case, shall either continue him in his former charge, or translate him, as they shall deem most for the peace and edification of the church."⁵ It is here implied that the Presbytery is more competent to judge of the affairs of a church, and to decide what is for its good, than the church itself. The church may think it best for their pastor to remove from them; but the Presbytery may think it best for him to stay; the only alternative the church has, is to starve him out, and this they cannot do, so long as they have real estate enough to pay his salary. This system is degrading to freemen, and insulting to Christianity!

Next to the Presbytery is the Synod, and then the General Assembly. The Session must submit its doings to the Presbytery, the Presbytery to the Synod, and the Synod to the General Assembly. Is this equality?

The Dutch Reformed church is governed in a manner similar to the Presbyterian.

Let us turn our attention for a moment to the Methodist Episcopal church. Shall we find equality here? No; for its very name shows that its government is prelatical. I need not enlarge on this point; for no one, surely, will pretend that there is equality in this church. Its founder expressly disavows any idea of it. He says, in a letter to John Mason, dated Jan. 13, 1790, "As long as I live the people shall have no share in choosing either stewards or leaders among the Methodists. We are no republicans, and never intend to be. It would be better for those who are so minded to go quietly away." There are more grades in the Methodist Episcopal church than in any other Protestant community; and any one who will read the "Discipline," will be convinced of it. A private member in the church has no voice whatever in the government. Private members are amenable to the class-leader - the class-leader to the preacher - the preacher to the presiding elder - the presiding elder to the bishop. Is this equality? The people have no voice in electing or dismissing their preacher, but must take whoever is sent, and let him go at the expiration of three years. The preacher has no choice of his field of labour. He must go just where the bishop may please to send him. The church does not receive or expel either her ministers or members. The circuit preacher has power to expel private members - the quarterly conference to expel local preachers, deacons and elders - the

yearly conference to expel travelling preachers - the general conference to expel bishops. Is this equality? Read the following question and answer in the Methodist Discipline, in reference to the ordination of an elder, and then read the text:

“Will you reverently obey your chief ministers, unto whom is committed the charge and government over you; following with a glad mind and will their godly admonitions, and submitting yourself to their godly judgments?”

“I will do so, the Lord being my helper.”⁶

Chief ministers! chief ministers! who are they? “One is your master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren.” Surely, the language of Christ, and the language of the Discipline are very dissimilar. These churches, whose forms of government I have reviewed, compose the great majority of the professedly christian world. It is evident, then, that such equality as the text teaches does not generally exist.

II. I proceed to show, in the second place, that Baptists seek to establish such equality. The principles of church government in the Baptist denomination are expressed in the text: “One is your master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren.” There is no opportunity for the assumption of authority by a few, if it were desired. All meet on the broad, even platform of equality. The rich and the poor, the minister, deacons, and people, are all brethren. The pastor is no more, the poorest member is no less, than one of the brethren. Each church, in its collective capacity, transacts its own business, exercises its own discipline, and receives and excludes its own members, subject only to the authority of Christ, and governed only by his Word. On all questions, every member of the church has an equal right to speak and to vote. There is no authority superior to the church, to reverse its decisions, or to call it to account. The pastor, while he has no superior authority, has equal rights with the rest of his brethren. If called to another field of labour, he is at liberty to go without asking leave of a bishop, presbytery, or council. He is perfectly free to act in accordance with his own views of duty and his own convictions of right.

In a Baptist church there is perfect equality. It could not be otherwise. They recognize the church as a voluntary organization, into which persons enter by their own choice, and whose privileges and benefits all have an equal right to share. Christ has nowhere delegated his authority to a body of arrogant ministers, or prelatical bishops, or blasphemous popes; and Christians have no right to recognize and uphold the assumption of authority by them. It is not a matter of indifference. To support the assumptions of men, who have arrogated to themselves authority which belongs only to Christ, is to engage with them in rebellion against the one only Master; and where this

is done knowingly, such cannot be held guiltless. In labouring, then, to advance Baptist sentiments, we aim to exalt Christ as the supreme and only Lawgiver and Ruler in Zion, in the place of presbyters, and bishops, and councils, and popes, who have usurped his throne.

But, some suppose that every church has a right to make its own laws, and to alter these laws to suit times, and circumstances, and places. Now, if the church was a merely human organization, this might be correct reasoning. But all churches claim to be of divine origin, and to have divine authority for their constitution and government. It is evident, therefore, that all cannot be right, for God cannot sanction contradictions. Further, if every church has a right to establish its own form of government, then the Romish church has an equal right with any Protestant church to invent and establish one, and no Protestant who takes this ground can consistently say a word against the Papal hierarchy. And if all are right, then right and wrong are no longer opposites. But all are not right. Christ has taught, in his Word, that the highest authority on earth is the church. Hence, in giving his apostles directions how to proceed in cases of offence, he designates the church as the supreme and final umpire. "Tell it to the church; and if he neglect to hear the church, let him be to thee as a heathen man and a publican." Tell it to the church; not to the session, or presbytery, or synod, or general assembly, or council, or conference, or bishop, or cardinal, or pope, but to the church; and if he neglect to hear the church - what then? appeal? No; there is no higher authority to appeal to; for "One is your master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren." The creation of other tribunals is the result of the arrogance of men who love to "lord it over God's heritage;" and the support of them is owing mainly to the influence of just such men, and their willing dupes. Baptists are willing to be "all brethren;" the ministry have no desire to be exalted to a position of rivalry to the Master in his church.

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. *Westminster Confession*, chap. xxx. sec. 1, 2. Is it not surprising that a church claiming to be so orthodox as the Presbyterian, should retain in its Confession of Faith, a section tending so directly to bolster up the Romish doctrine of priestly absolution? Suppose an honest inquirer after truth in the Romish church should meet this, in his researches; would he not begin to think, and with good reason, that Presbyterianism and Romanism differ only in name?
2. *Form of Government*, sections 1, 4, 6.
3. *Directory for Worship*, chap. 9, sec. 1, 2.
4. *Form of Government*, chap. xv. sec. 9
5. *Ibid.*, chap. xvi. sec. 1.
6. *Discipline*, part II. chap. iii. sec. 2.

An Introduction to the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith

ERROLL HULSE

Until the time of the conversion of the Roman Emperor Constantine, the Church of Christ prospered in spite of severe persecutions from the state.

During the Middle Ages, Church and state became increasingly allied. Under popes who were astute politicians the Church gained ascendancy to the point of assuming authority over both Church and state. Eventually, a situation prevailed in the Holy Roman Empire in which whole nations in their entirety were 'Christian'. Total conformity by all was required. The 16th century Reformation brought a dramatic change when whole nations became Protestant.

England was one such nation in which Church and state remained monolithic. The change was from Roman Catholicism to Anglicanism. All, without exception, were obliged to hold to the same faith. Uniformity was required by law.

Scotland became Presbyterian, which meant that the National Church was governed by ministers meeting in a national synod or conference, rather than by bishops and archbishops, as in the Episcopal system of Church government as found in Roman Catholicism and Anglicanism.

Those of Baptist persuasion multiplied in England during the 17th century, producing their first Baptist Confession of Faith, consisting of 52 articles, in 1644. The period from 1640 to 1660 is known in English history as the Commonwealth period, when the country was ruled by Parliament and led for much of that time by Oliver Cromwell. It was a very exceptional time because a large measure of religious freedom prevailed.

Until that period, the most stringent conformity to Anglicanism was required and those who did not conform were cruelly persecuted. Many ministers emigrated to the Netherlands and later to the United States, seeking a place where they could enjoy freedom of religion.

England reverted to the monarchical system in 1660 when Charles II came to the throne. Rigid religious conformity was soon asserted, even more severely than before. In 1662 over 2000 ministers and doctors of divinity (men who held lectureships or teaching positions in Bible instruction) were ejected from their livings. For Baptists it was a period of great tension. Many of their ministers suffered heavy times of

imprisonment for attending worship services regarded as being against the law.

In 1677 the Baptists published their second Confession of Faith, which was modelled almost entirely on the best known of all Confessions in the English speaking world - the Westminster Confession of Faith, which is a document of 33 chapters written by Christian leaders during the period from 1643 to 1648, with the idea that it would become the Confession for the whole nation in place of the Anglican religion. This, we have seen with the return of the nation to monarchy, was not to be. Nevertheless, the Westminster Confession has become the Confession of Faith used by Presbyterian denominations throughout the world, with one important modification which is the principle of the absolute separation of Church and state.

The Congregational or Independent churches embraced the Westminster Confession in what is called the Savoy Declaration (1658). The Savoy Confession contains only minor amendments. Similarly, the Baptists made only slight changes in adopting the Westminster Confession but did make two radical and complete alterations:

1. With regard to baptism of believers by immersion and the subsequent nature of the Church to consist only of those who have a credible profession of faith and who voluntarily submit to believers' baptism.
2. The Separation of Church and state.

The pressures of persecution in 1677 were such that the Baptists published their Confession almost in secret. The printers did not put their name on the edition. However, in 1688 when William of Orange became King, and Act of Toleration was passed by which Non-conformists, who were called 'Dissenters,' were able to register their churches and thus became officially recognised.

The time was now propitious for the Baptists to publish their Confession, which has subsequently become known as the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith.

Most confessions of faith are produced to combat heresy. Maximum clarity is required. In this way, in the early centuries from the Councils of Nicea and Chalcedon, the Christian Church was endowed with brilliant statements describing the unity of the Trinity. Also set forth was the person of Christ in the unity of his person - two perfect natures, divine and human, united in one person without confusion.

The great worth of the 1689 Baptist Confession is that it sets out to provide a comprehensive, systematic statement of what we believe, based on Scripture. The biblical references are provided from first to last.

The reasons for the Confession are the same now as they were in 1677 and 1689. During the Commonwealth, heterodox, fanatical sects sprang up. The Baptists wished to express the essence and fulness of their faith and disassociate from false sects, some

of which were a threat to civil order. For instance, in 1660 a band of 50 men, led by one named Venner, led an armed rebellion in London. All Non-conformists came under increased suspicion as a result of this. The Baptists had also been badly embarrassed by the fact that one of their most popular and successful evangelists, a man named Collier, suddenly veered into heresy.

A further reason for adopting confessional standards was that the Baptists were losing members to a body of very sincere believers who put inner feelings above the authority of Scripture.

The Baptists also required a confession by which they could express their unity. The 1689 Confession has been an instrument of unity for Baptist associations of churches for over 300 years.

In 1744, Baptist groupings in New England adopted the 1689 Confession amending it slightly and calling it the Philadelphia Confession. Today the 1689 Confession is embraced by churches not only in European nations but all over the world, including black churches in Africa and Chinese and Filipino churches in the Far East.

The primary reason for the enduring quality and usefulness of the 1689 Confession is its closeness to Scripture as well as its balance. The ability to express the truth so clearly was given to a group of ministers of outstanding godliness and talent, the like of which has seldom been seen. England has never been more blessed than she was during what is known as the Puritan period of 1558 to 1662. Godly pastors who preached with great power multiplied in the land. John Bunyan was man of that time and class.

Bunyan and C. H. Spurgeon are the most famous of all Baptist preachers and writers. Spurgeon loved the Puritan writers dearly and recommended their expositions of Scripture as the most helpful. In 1855, when he began his famous ministry in London, Spurgeon republished the 1689 Confession of Faith.

In a day when biblical Christianity is being challenged by other religions and when it is so often misrepresented by false teachers, it is an asset for Bible believing churches to have this well-proven Confession as a guide and teaching aid.

Scripture alone is supreme, but there are sects which distort its meaning. It is important, therefore, to express the precise meaning of the great central doctrines of our faith. The 1689 Confession is in itself a reminder that the minister of the Gospel is to proclaim the whole range of God's Word with clarity of doctrine to the building up of believers and the salvation of the lost.

This article was first published as part of an insert in Challenge Weekly in 1989. The insert was produced by New Zealand Reformed Baptist Churches to commemorate the 300th anniversary of the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith.

How the 1689 Confession changed me

BRIAN STONE

My understanding of the grace and mercy of God, that later led me to an understanding of the doctrines of God's grace and mercy, was a gradual and 'evolutionary' process.

My initial Christian experience, as a young person, was in an Arminian Baptist Church and throughout my teenage years the focus was always and entirely on man and his response to the gospel. The emphasis was on man's choice, man's decision, and man's free will to accept or reject the gospel. And yet, in all this I look back with gratitude to God for the evidence of His grace that was already at work in my life.

It was out of that situation and with this understanding of the gospel that I began to sense God's call to study for the ministry. This sense of call that I had was confirmed to me by some godly men in my home Church who also confirmed the gifts that God had most graciously given. I look back with gratitude to God for them and their counsel, and for one man in particular who later played a significant role in my life in nudging me and directing me towards a Reformed position.

After completing my schooling, and having done my time in the military, I spent a few years in a family business, while at the same time trying to equip myself by reading and studying the Scriptures, albeit without any real guidance or direction with regard to a reading program. I then entered upon a four-year program of study at a Theological College in order to prepare myself for the pastoral ministry. The situation in our denomination was such that my studies coincided with a group of believers establishing the first Reformed Baptist Church in our country. There was a very negative reaction to this and for four years the undertone of most of my theological training was to undermine and caricature the Reformed faith, of which I knew very little. I was simply conditioned to believe that to be Reformed was wrong. The more I think back upon those days, the more I realize how central man was to my theology, and how little emphasis was placed upon the sovereignty of God.

Without any real theological foundation whatsoever, I was immature and impressionable and so came quite easily to embrace an Arminian understanding of the gospel. Having graduated from College I entered my first pastorate where I soon began to wrestle with issues, arising out of the preaching of the Word, both theological and doctrinal. My theology affected my ecclesiology and I became extremely pragmatic. However, God laid it on my heart to exercise an expository pulpit ministry, where, in doing so, I began to struggle over theological issues, and where I was not able to find

help and peace of mind as I looked back over my theological training.

I was taught that the word 'Reformed' was anathema, but found myself, in the providence of God, being drawn to an older brother in the ministry who lent me some tapes by Al Martin. There I discovered for the first time that there was such a thing as the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, and the *Larger* and *Shorter Catechisms*. And then, to my utter amazement I discovered that there was a document called the *1689 Baptist Confession of Faith* and that it was similar in many ways to the *Westminster Confession*. Having been a Baptist all my life and having studied at a Baptist institution, this was the first time that I was ever made aware of such a Confession!

All this took place over a period of about six years, at the end of which, I was able to say that I was in the process of moving from an Arminian way of thinking to a Reformed understanding of the Christian faith. It was at this stage that I moved to my second Church, and in that city there was a man who was Reformed in his doctrine, warm in his fellowship, godly in his lifestyle and with a great love for the gospel of Jesus Christ - and what's more he had a library of good tapes by godly and Reformed men!

Shortly after settling in to my second pastorate, I went to a Presbyterian minister and asked him to lend me a copy of the Westminster Confession of Faith. What I discovered in that was unbelievable. Soon after that I was able to acquire a copy of the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith, which, as I read, studied, and worked through it, it was as if I had been converted for the first time. Suddenly an understanding of my salvation was given substance, meaning, and purpose, and I felt grieved to think that I had been robbed of these glorious truths for so many years.

That was how and where my understanding and pilgrimage of the Reformed faith began in my life. I look back with a deep sense gratitude to God for His grace and mercy to me - for not only showing me the wells that our godly forefathers had dug, but also for enabling me to drink of that water, and for Him continuing to create within me an ongoing thirst for more. May God preserve me from ever saying, this side of eternity, that my thirst has been totally satisfied, and I no longer need to drink. I have discovered, that the more one drinks of this water, the sweeter it becomes.

A Faith To Confess
The 1689

Here in modern English is the most famous of Baptist Confessions containing the heart and soul of the Reformation in terms of clear Biblical truth. Statements of truth such as this are vital to the prosperity of the Church and call for the earnest attention of all believers.

paperback, 68 pages

\$8.95

available from Grace & Truth Publications
(see page 5 for contact details and postage charges)



Reformation in Church Attendance

MARTIN HOLDT

Never was that old saying more true and more relevant than today: 'The married couple that prays together stays together.' To that saying could be added another, 'The married couple that goes to church together grow stronger together.' In my ministry of 40 years I have noted that about 90 percent of those who ask for pastoral counselling are irregular in church attendance. To this observation I will add a remarkable discovery. In one American State the divorce rate has reached 50 percent. Further investigation produced the amazing fact that of that 50 percent divorced only one in 54 were regular church goers and only one in 500 belonged to the category of those who read a Bible and pray together daily.

How important is regular church attendance? Is it not a fact that regular attendance at both Lord's Day services is the strength of the local church and absenteeism her weakness? I have personally discovered that approximately 90 percent of people who come for pastoral counselling are irregular in attendance of church services. That seems to say something! It is important to know why attendance to the means of grace, that is the regular preaching of the Word of God, is vital.

The fact of the matter is that the devil doesn't want people to hear the Word of God. His tactic is to maximise distractions by creating attractive competitive interests. In most wealthy nations the principal distraction is sport, either to be involved or to be taken up watching sporting events on TV. The words of the prophet Isaiah are so relevant today. 'If you keep your feet from breaking the Sabbath and from doing as you please on my holy day, if you call the Sabbath a delight and the Lord's holy day honourable, and if you honour it by not going your own way and not doing as you please or speaking idle words, then you will find your joy in the Lord, and I will cause you to ride on the heights of the land and to feast on the inheritance of your father Jacob. The mouth of the Lord has spoken' (Isaiah 58:13-14).

Hebrews 10:25 addresses the heart of the matter. 'Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another - and all the more as you see the Day approaching.' When considering this verse we need to know the purpose for the writing of the letter to the Hebrews. It was written to encourage believers who were beginning to suffer from spiritual fatigue and who were being urged to persevere and not to throw in the towel. Various arguments are used to restore them to a spirit of zeal. For example, they are told of the superiority of Jesus over angels, over Moses and Aaron and of the superiority of the new covenant over the old.

They are warned of the dangers of falling away, and they are reminded that there is absolutely no substitute for the Christian faith. Then comes this verse, 10:25. The letter to the Hebrews was written not too long after Pentecost when it was said of early believers: 'Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts' (Acts 2:46). Now however things had changed, and there was a need to urge believers not to slacken in their zeal concerning attendance on the means of grace.

Absence from church services must be resisted. 'Let us not,' are the opening words of exhortation. Christian living includes negative resisting. In James 4:7 we are told: 'Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.' The devil will stand in the way of anyone who wishes to put himself under the sound of truth. The sinful nature will suggest an alternative to attending the ministry of the word of God, and Colossians 3:5 is pertinent to this point: 'Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.' Therefore, when a person stays away from the ministry of the Word of God, the question ought to be asked: 'Is what is being done to be preferred to the experience of hearing the Bible expounded?' Next it is important to note that absenting oneself from a place of worship can become a bad 'habit.' The danger too of others learning from a poor example is ever there, and children particularly are influenced by bad habits. From the youngest age children discern the difference between spiritual zeal and spiritual sloth. Since sanctification amounts to replacing bad habits with good habits, the bad habit of becoming slack in church attendance is to be resisted firmly. A habit is a settled tendency or practice. We are to beware of bad habits, and we are to cultivate good ones, 'You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness' (Ephesians 4:22-24).

Why is irregularity in attendance of church services a bad habit?

Firstly, it is despising the primary means of grace given by God. When Jesus told Peter to 'feed my sheep,' he was commissioning him to a work to which all pastors are called, namely to labour in the Word and in doctrine so that the people of God may be fed with the truth of the Word. God gives to his servants a word for the people. This is God's way of providing spiritual food for his people. When he spoke to the seven churches in the book of Revelation, in each case it was through the appointed messenger. There would have been no compensation for absentees if they were not there to hear the message given to the messenger. If a person is not there when God spreads the table, it amounts

to saying, 'No thank you, God.' That is terrible! The only time I excused my children from the table when they were at home was when they were ill. If they were absent with a feeble excuse, it would have been considered an insult to their mother as she lovingly prepared meals for them. The same holds true for those who carelessly absent themselves from the place of worship when the Word of God is being preached.

What water is to a plant, the preached word is to a believer. For lack of it some wilt and all but die spiritually. Admittedly, there will be times when the pulpit will disappoint, but is it always the preacher's fault? Have the hearers prepared themselves? Has there been adequate praying for the ministry of the Word? This is essential if we understand passages of Scripture like Ephesians 6:19-20: 'Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.'

Absenting oneself from a place of worship can become a bad habit'. . . . Since sanctification amounts to replacing bad habits with good habits, the bad habit of becoming slack in church attendance is to be resisted firmly.

It is significant that in Psalm 73:16-17 Asaph's spiritual problem was solved when he went to the sanctuary. That is where we are brought to see life in the perspective of God's purposes. Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones once said that more problems are solved in the pew under the sound of good preaching than anywhere else. The godly Anna was in the temple when the child Jesus made his first appearance, and she was well into her eighties! How many people there must be who miss God's special visits of grace through the preaching of the Word simply because they are not there.

Secondly, it is a bad habit because it is a poor use of one of the greatest gifts God has given to mankind, namely, the gift of time. A calculation of the amount of time it takes to attend three meetings a week will reveal that it would amount to less than 5 percent of the time God has given to us each week! This includes the time spent in travelling! Furthermore, the time spent amongst the people of God before the

Word of God is more hallowed than time spent anywhere else. This small investment of time spent in God's house is beneficial beyond all other expenditure of time since here we are dealing with the issues of eternity.

Thirdly, irregular attendance at church services is bad because it is slighting our Lord whose special presence is promised when we meet for worship. Matthew 18:20:

'For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.' When Thomas was absent when Jesus met with his disciples in his post-resurrection appearance, our Lord did not make up to him by a special personal visit afterwards. Thomas had to be with the assembled group in order to meet the risen Christ. George Swinnock, the Puritan, made the point that the actual meaning of Psalm 87:2, 'The Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob,' is that our Lord's coming amongst his assembled people is preferred by him to family worship. Our private devotions are essential to the maintaining of our Christian faith and walk, but even more important is our gathering together with God's people.

Fourthly, slackness in attendance of church meetings is a bad habit because it is declaring an indifference to fellow believers. In the previous verse in Hebrews 10:25 believers are told to 'Consider one another in love'. How can a believer honestly declare his compliance with Jesus' command to love one another if he stays away from the gathering of the saints when they meet? Presence and participation of a believer with the family of God's people is meant to be a positive encouragement.

Fifthly, it is a bad habit because it is a sign of spiritual ill-health. How do we know when the Psalmist was at his best? We know this precisely because he could declare, 'My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God' (Psalm 84:2), and 'I rejoiced with those who said to me, "Let us go to the house of the Lord"' (Psalm 122:1). Surely these statements are the thoughts of a man whose delight in God was such that he was quite ecstatic about the gathering of God's people to worship him and to be instructed in his Word. When believers cannot identify with these feelings, it is indicative of a spiritual sickness for which healing is necessary.

Sixthly it is a bad habit because it is derogatory of God's house. If you stay at home for a frivolous reason, what message does that send to your neighbour? Surely the unconverted have reason to ask, 'Does such a cause get such half-hearted support? Are these believers serious about their claim to deny self, take up the cross and follow Christ? Do they really love God?' I have often heard people excuse their absence from a Sunday service because of visitors who arrived unexpectedly. What a poor testimony it is to give in to the sudden and unexpected arrival of visitors! Surely if the visitors do not respond to an invitation to attend the service they can be urged to make themselves at home until their hosts return.

A common excuse for irregular attendance is, 'I don't get anything out of the preaching!' It is true that preachers can go through dry times, but we need to face this problem positively. As I asked above, have the hearers prepared themselves? Has there been adequate praying for the ministry of the Word? Even though the exposition may be below par, 'the Word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword... it judges thoughts and attitudes of the heart' (Hebrews 4:12).

I conclude with this exhortation. Examine yourself with regard to church attendance. Remember that the Lord designs to build up his people through this means of grace. Remember too that besides the benefit of listening to preaching, worship should include:

Bringing sacrifices of praise and gratitude to God's house and going with the positive objective of worship.

Going to meet with and encourage others. Besides the regular 'family of God' whose fellowship we enjoy, we should be on the lookout to encourage visitors and make them feel welcome.

This article also appears in Issue 183 (September-October 2001) of Reformation Today and is reprinted here with permission.

Autumn Gold

Enjoying Old Age
by Clifford Pond

Old age can be endured or enjoyed, regarded as a burden or accepted as a blessing. In this wise and positive book Clifford Pond shows how old age can be enjoyed as it is lived in the light of God's presence and in accord with God's Word. He confronts head on some of the pitfalls of old age such as a negative attitude to life and the tendency to always be living in the past 'golden age'. He shows how these and other faults may be overcome by applying the principles and promises of Scripture to our lives. But throughout his primary emphasis is on *enjoying* old age to the glory of God.

Clifford Pond skilfully blends spiritual insights into Scripture with much practical counsel on such matters as keeping fit, when to give up one's home, making a will, and remarrying after the death of a wife or husband. And he draws on the wisdom of other senior citizens and the experience of those who have cared for a loved one suffering from a prolonged physical illness or senile dementia.

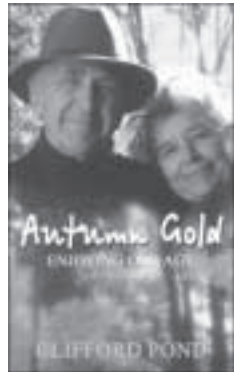
As Peter Tervet points out in his foreword this book meets a real need. First, it helps Christians (and others) to prepare for retirement. Second, it encourages the senior citizen to live positively in old age. Third - and by no means least - it helps the younger generation to understand the problems and the challenges of old age. And it has much to say to churches about valuing and caring for the elderly in their midst.

After many years of pastoral ministry in England, Clifford Pond now lives in active retirement.

paperback, 160 pages

\$20.95

available from Grace & Truth Publications
(see page 5 for contact details and postage charges)





Like father, like son

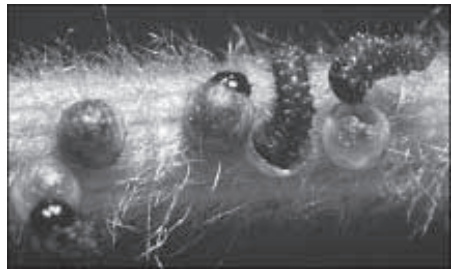
Dear Readers,

Do you know the old English proverb, "A chip off the old block"? I remember my mother calling me this! I can't remember what I did, but her words told me that I had behaved as my father would have done. We might say the same thing in a different way: "Like father, like son."

This was as true of people two thousand years ago as it is today. In fact, Peter uses this idea in 1 Peter 1:14-15. Peter is saying something like this: "Though you were once children of this world you are now the children of God, so don't live as though things are the same as they were before God changed you."

Christians are children of God. A great change has taken place. Someone who once was spiritually dead, unable to do the things that please God and unwilling to honour and serve Him, has been changed into a different creature; one who loves God and hates evil, one who wants to please God and serve Him, one who loves to do right and sorrows over sin.

This is a huge change that has happened. It's like the difference between the caterpillar and the butterfly. The caterpillar hatches from a tiny egg and gorges itself on leaves, growing at an amazing rate, before its skin hardens into a chrysalis. There it remains, looking lifeless, until one day it crawls from its covering as a very different creature, with colourful wings which carry it away to feed upon the nectar of flowers. What a change! From something ugly to something beautiful, from something that crawls to something that flies, from something that chews leaves to something that drinks delicious nectar. If you didn't know the truth you wouldn't believe that the beautiful butterfly could have such a different beginning. But what would we think if the butterfly refused to use its wings to fly to the flower for nectar, and instead walked across leaves trying to



eat them as it had done when it was a caterpillar?
Silly creature - it no longer has a mouth that can chew leaves, it should be using its wings to get to the flowers and its long tongue to reach in and suck the nectar.

This is like the change that has happened to the Christian man, woman, boy or girl. Changed from a sinner into a saint, from something ugly into a beautiful thing by the power of God. Peter says that the Christian should no longer live in the old ways - he's no longer suited to that kind of lifestyle since he has become a child of God: there is a better way for him to live now.



So having shown Christians that they are new people, he goes on to explain that they should live new lives: "like father, like son." Peter wants his readers to see that wise children imitate good parents. God is the perfect Father who is worth imitating more than anyone else. Peter says that his readers should be obedient children to this perfect Father. They are to follow in the steps of Jesus, and grow to be holy like Him. They were changed when they were saved from their sins, and instead of living ugly, self-centred lives, they should now live beautiful, God-serving lives.

If you are a Christian boy or girl, then you have been made into a new creature. You must ask God to help you to live a good life which will please Him and to make you like Jesus. If you are not a Christian then, like the caterpillar that changes into a butterfly, you need to be changed. God will do this for you when you truly, from your heart, ask Jesus to take away your sins and make you perfect like Him.

With best wishes,

Dafydd

Kids' Corner

For you to do!

The Bible has lots of stories about different people who were changed by God when they met Jesus. Read the following passages and try to answer the questions:

Luke 19:1-10

Acts 9:1-30

Who was changed in each story?
What was the difference after they met Jesus compared with the way they had lived before?

Book Reviews

Books reviewed here are available from *Grace & Truth Publications*
(see page 5 for contact details and postage rates)

The Keys of the Kingdom

A Study on the Biblical Form of
Church Government

Poh Boon Sing

Good News Enterprise

Hardcover 418 pages ISBN 9-8399-5769-4

G&T price: \$58.25

Poh Boon Sing is a pastor of a reformed Baptist Church in Malaysia. He has written a book on an important area - church government. Because there is not much literature on Reformed Baptist Church Government this is a timely work.

The strength of this work is its biblical and historical analysis. Poh studies a number of areas including the Headship of Christ, the nature of elders, the pastor and ordination, the gathered church principle and communion of churches. Poh demonstrates that the Reformed Baptist churches have a rich and important heritage.

Pastor Poh takes the view that independency (sometimes known as historic congregationalism) is the biblical form of church government. Independency is the view that each congregation is under Christ and subject to no outside jurisdiction. Elders rule in such a way as to involve the consent of the congregation. Poh contrasts this to modern congregationalism where the church is essentially governed by 'democracy' and there is no elder rule. He generally follows John Owen's view of church government (minus Owen's infant baptism!). Poh contrasts the Reformed Baptist position (independency) to other

forms of church government such as the Presbyterian and Anglican systems. This is one of the useful features in the book.

It would be helpful if a future edition of the book contained a chapter on church membership, as it is often a neglected area of the church. I understand Poh has published a separate booklet on the subject. I believe he presented a biblical case for the autonomy of the local church. Christ is the head of the church and other systems (e.g. Presbyterian) tend to deny the headship of Christ by having systems such as Synods etc above the local church.

The chapter on the priority of the ministry has created debate in RB churches, especially in the USA. I think he made his case rather well with 1 Tim 5:17 - "Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine." These verses establish an 'office' or role of Teaching Elder within the eldership - though elders

remain equal in authority. I would prefer he talked about the importance of the ministry rather than the priority of the ministry - sometimes the charge is levelled against Reformed churches that they are nothing but preaching centres rather than a full-orbed biblical church.

However, Poh's comments about the ministry are important.

The final chapters on the gathered church and communion of churches were excellent and convincingly show that only the RB position is consistent with the Bible. He demonstrates how that infant baptism denies the covenant of grace.



I grew up in a solidly evangelical brethren church where we were taught that the 'brethren' church government was the biblical system. The brethren system denies the ministry. Therefore I found this book very insightful and a fine introduction to the biblical principles of church government.

Stephen Smith

Teach Me While My Heart Is Tender

Judy Rogers

Judy Rogers Music

CD - 30 tracks - 73 minutes

G&T price: \$25.95

For all those taxi-Mums looking for a new CD, Judy Rogers' *Teach me while my heart is tender* is a wonderful investment. It is a collection of Judy Rogers' best songs for children from her previous recordings *Why can't I see God* (on the Westminster Catechism) and *Go to the Ant* (on Proverbs) as well as selected songs from *Stand Up* and *Walkin' Wise*.

The appeal of this CD lies not only in the catchy folk tunes but also in the simple yet powerful, Biblical lyrics written from a child's perspective. Rogers has managed to convey the essence and remain faithful to the wording of the catechism while at the same time giving it a down-to-earth flavour. What Christian parent (and child) could resist the practical theology of these words: "When I'm in the kitchen and no one's around I know I can sneak and get cookies. But I will obey what my mother has said for I know that God will be looking"? What Christian mother could fail to see the benefit of her child meditating on these words based on the wisdom of Proverbs: "Oh the tongue - it can cut like a knife - Oh the tongue can ruin an innocent life. Stop. Think about. Think about the way that you say. . . the things that you say - Oh the tongue can encourage a

friend or the tongue can cause a friendship to end. What will you say today?"

The 15 songs based on the Westminster Catechism have complemented beautifully our girls' memorisation of the children's catechism. Emily and Kirstin love listening to the CD and it helps to set a happy tone in the home. My 7 yr-old now wanders round the house singing the songs and I'm sure my 5 yr-old will be singing them in the shower soon! They always have a giggle when one particular boy sings in a croaky voice "God made the kangaroo, the fish that swim in the ocean blue." The fact that he doesn't

sing in perfect tune lends the CD a really personal touch reminding one that the Christian life (and music) is not all about professionalism but a living relationship with our creator God.

If you have teenagers as well as young children in your family this CD may suit your needs as the last 7 tracks are aimed at a teenage audience. They are more typical of contemporary Christian music fare but with good, Biblical content. If you prefer to stick with the children's songs you could purchase the albums *Why can't I see God?* and *Go to the Ant* separately. But whatever you choose to do, in Judy Rogers' words, "May God be pleased to use this music mightily for His greater glory."

Robyn Good

He Made the Stars Also

What the Bible says about the stars

Stuart Burgess

Day One Publications

Paperback 186 pages ISBN 1-903087-13-9

G&T price: \$25.95

The first words of the Bible are, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth..." (Genesis 1:1-2). How



striking the end of one sentence and the beginning of the next - "...the earth. And the earth..." - such fascinating repetition. The initial purpose of the author is to inform us that everything in the universe was created by God. There is utter resistance to any hint of dualism. The one living and true God alone made everything that exists. But then the author takes his readers a step further, that henceforth his intention is to focus upon our planet earth. So from a contemplation of all created bodies beside our own, the Bible takes a geocentric emphasis, and it maintains that perspective throughout, to its last page. It centres our attention upon this world in which we live, on which we have sinned and to which the Son of God came by incarnation, living long years, dying as the Lamb of God, rising from the dead for our salvation and also for the redemption of a new heaven and earth.

The Bible could not think of this world in any other way, but the theological centre of the entire universe, and neither can the Christian. Not for us the common dismissal of the earth as a mere speck in the vastness of space, and mortal men as chance creations of utter insignificance in comparison to the cosmos. Not for us the accusations of arrogance that we err by concentrating so much on ourselves and this little planet, and that we are pumping ourselves up to be something when we are scarcely anything at all. This is a world created with purpose by God, on which he made our first parents in his own image and likeness. This is a world visited by God incarnate. This is the sphere of redeeming grace to be for ever the centre of God's purpose. This earth became the setting for the display of greater glory than that seen at the moment the fiat "Let there be light" was uttered, when that Creator Ruler was

breathing its air and eating food.

He Made the Stars Also surveys planet earth from this perspective, and Dr. Stuart Burgess examines the stars which God also made from an identical geocentricity. Both our world and the heavens seem to sparkle with a new identity as a

consequence of his writing.

On almost every page there are facts, insights and clear biblical teaching on controversial opinions which make this book an adventure, enthralling, and very challenging. I suppose that I appreciated it most of all for the strain of doxology that runs like living waters through it all.

Geoff Thomas



The Difficult Doctrine of the Love of God

D A Carson

Inter-Varsity Press

Paperback 111 pages ISBN 0-85111-975-1

G&T price: \$19.50

In the opening chapter of this interesting book Don Carson explains why the love of God is a difficult doctrine. He goes on to outline five distinguishable aspects of the love of God, and closes the chapter by suggesting three dangers of making any one of these aspects dominate the others.

In the second chapter Carson homes in on the first aspect of God's love - the love of the Father for the Son and of the Son for the Father. He demonstrates, by examining a few representative texts, that the revelation in Scripture of the eternal co-existence of the Father and Son in a relationship of mutual love presents us with proof that God is love in His very being, and that this has consequences for humanity.

The third chapter proceeds to examine the love of God in relation to His divine

nature: the fact that He is completely sovereign and utterly above the created order. The dangers of equating God's love with our own are reviewed, and careful consideration is given to how His love and His sovereignty are willing partners rather than opposing forces.

In the fourth and final chapter Carson demonstrates carefully and effectively that God is at one and the same time the God of love and the God of wrath. Not only is God's wrath directed against sin, but the sinner as perpetrator of the sin is also subject to the wrath of God. Yet despite this, it is also true that God's love extends to the sinner, so that while they lived in sin Christ died for the ungodly.

This is an excellent little book dealing with an important subject. A careful reading of its pages will enlighten the mind and result in profound gratitude to God for His unspeakable love.

Beyond Death and Dishonour

One Japanese at War in New Zealand

Michiharu Shinya

Castle Publishing

Paperback 155 pages ISBN 0-9582124-6-5

G&T price: \$16.95

Few in New Zealand will remember the Prisoner of War camp near the township of Featherston in the Wairarapa. For almost three years, from early in 1943 to 30th December 1945, it was home to about 800 Japanese POWs. The camp was dismantled after the war, but it endures in the memories of those who lived and worked there.

One of those POWs was Michiharu

Shinya, a lieutenant in the Japanese Navy when the destroyer on which he served as torpedo officer was sunk by American warships off Guadalcanal on 12 November 1942.

Michiharu was plucked from the water the following day, and sent to New Zealand.

This book is the fascinating account of two journeys. The first, a journey through time and space from that fatal night of battle, through weeks of confinement on transport ships and three years in a POW camp, to repatriation in Japan. The second, a journey from spiritual death to life in Christ.

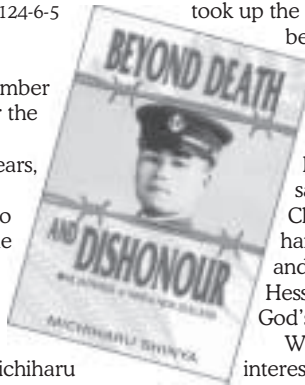
Michiharu provides helpful insight into the struggles he endured as he tried to come to terms with captivity, for to the Japanese of his generation to die in battle was honourable while to be captured and imprisoned was the ultimate dishonour. Yet it was while a captive struggling with issues of life and death that Michiharu came across a quotation in an article by Roka Tokutomi; "But those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint."

Thinking it must come from the Bible, he took up the holy book for the first time and began to read it from the

beginning in search of the text. Finding it in Isaiah 40, he continued to read the Old Testament and then the New.

In this way he was brought to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, and then, along with a handful of other POW converts, and under the guidance of Rev Hessel Troughton, he studied God's Word each week.

Whether or not you have any interest in war, this book will thrill



any Christian who loves to read of the power of God at work in the lives of sinners. It would also be excellent for a non-Christian as it helpfully traces one man's search for truth in a way that is meaningful to us all.

Pastors Under Pressure

Conflicts on the outside, conflicts within

James Taylor

Day One Publications

Paperback 96 pages ISBN 1-903087-10-4

G&T price: \$14.75

This is a helpful little book from the pen of a Baptist pastor with almost 40 years of experience in the pastoral ministry. Chapter 1 deals with the identity of the pastor, the problem of role expectations and the pressure to conform to what the congregation wants rather than what the scriptures demand. Related to this is the pressure to justify one's existence. In the second chapter Taylor moves on to deal with discouragement. He describes its causes and offers some solutions. He relates an incident from the life of Martin Luther: "Luther's wife came to him and, obviously dejected, said to him. 'Have you heard the terrible news? God is dead!' Deeply shocked, he rebuked her for her blasphemous words. 'And if God is not dead', she retorted, 'what right have you, his servant, you a Christian man, to be so downcast and depressed?'"

Chapter 3 tackles the perennial problem of criticism, examining where it comes from Taylor acknowledges that some criticism can be just. He encourages dependence upon the Lord but also explains that there is a time and place for challenging the critical.

The chapter on loneliness is interesting and helpful. The author looks at aspects of loneliness and the need for friendships, and he gives a helpful focus on the necessity of developing aloneness with God. The following three chapters consider the causes, results and remedy to dryness, reasons for a

sense of failure and the measures of success, and the problem of temptation and how to deal with it.

The eighth and final chapter entitled "Moving on-or out" deals with leaving a church, either to move to another or because of retirement. The author considers how the church should be told of this change, and describes the problems a pastor can have in his attitudes to his successor. He also deals briefly with ageing, and the book closes with an enlightening post-script written by his wife, "The Ministers Wife and Retirement".

As with so many books on the pressures of pastoral ministry, this one will not realise its full potential for good unless it is read by church members as well as pastors. Reading this book will open the understanding of members to the difficulties their pastor faces and enable them to better heed the Lord's exhortation: "Obey those who rule over you and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you" (Hebrews 13:17).



Grace & Truth

Family Bible Conferences 2001

This year the conference speaker is Erroll Hulse, who is Associate Pastor at Leeds Reformed Baptist Church in England. He oversees the International Fellowship of Reformed Baptists, and is editor of the *Reformation Today* magazine. Erroll has spoken at Christian conferences in many countries and is the author of a number of books. He is married to Lyn who will accompany him on this his third visit to New Zealand.

CHRISTCHURCH

On 31st October 1517 Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses to the door of a church in Wittenburg, the then accepted method of announcing a public debate. It set in motion the reformation of the Church. 31st October has since become known as "Reformation Day" and Erroll's talks will reflect the importance of this event for today's church.

WEDNESDAY 31ST OCTOBER

- 12.00 pm Church Leaders' Lunch
Learning from the Luthers
- 7.30 pm CONFERENCE Session 1
Justification through an alien righteousness
- 8.15 pm Refreshments
- 8.45 pm CONFERENCE Session 2
Sanctification: a Christian's full time business

VENUE: Kirkwood Intermediate School

AUCKLAND

Erroll will speak at five sessions covering a range of biblical, biographical and historical subjects.

FRIDAY 2ND NOVEMBER

- 7.00 pm *Christian's dual citizenship*
8.00 pm Refreshments

SATURDAY 3RD NOVEMBER

- 5.00 pm *Learning from Martin and Katie Luther*
6.00 pm Meal
7.00 pm *How to be both biblical and contemporary*

SUNDAY 4TH NOVEMBER

- 10.30 am *Sanctification: a Christian's full time business*
12.00 pm Lunch
6.00 pm *Who are the Puritans and what do we owe to them?*

VENUE: Westlake Girls High School

Contributors:

Editor: Dafydd Hughes Sub-editor: Chris Good

JOHN QUINCY ADAMS (1825-1881) was initially a paedobaptist and then became a convinced baptist and pastor of a church in New Jersey, USA.

MARTIN HOLDT is the pastor of Constantia Park Baptist Church in Pretoria, South Africa, and a regular contributor to the *Reformation Today* magazine.

DAFYDD HUGHES is the pastor of Grace Baptist Church in Christchurch.

ERROLL HULSE is the associate pastor of Leeds Reformed Baptist Church in England, and oversees the work of the International Fellowship of Reformed Baptists. He will be the speaker at the Grace & Truth Conferences (see inside back cover).

BRIAN STONE is the former pastor of Constantia Baptist Church in South Africa and now runs a Christian retreat.

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.

Contact details:

Grace & Truth Magazine
P.O. Box 8979
Christchurch
New Zealand

e-mail: magazine@graceandtruth.rbc.org.nz

Internet: www.graceandtruth.rbc.org.nz/magazine/

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Cover Picture

On 11 September 2001 the twin towers of the World Trade Center in Manhattan, New York, were the targets of a terrorist attack which claimed thousands of lives and left thousands more injured.