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THE BURNING BUSH

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LOVE DIVIDES, TRUTH UNITES (1 COR 13:6)

Jeffrey Khoo

We often hear the slogan—“Love unites, doctrine divides”—from those intent on forming a one world order and a one world church or religion. The disturbing thing is that people are beginning to believe that this is what the Bible teaches. Someone has said that if you tell a lie long enough, people will begin to believe it is true.

There is a need for us to critique this statement: “Love unites, doctrine divides.” Does love unite and doctrine divide? Or does love divide and doctrine unite?

Truth and Love are not incompatible with each other. Paul in 1 Corinthians 13:6 tells us that “love rejoices in the truth.” When Paul mentions truth here, he is not just thinking about the virtues of honesty, sincerity, truthfulness, etc. Please note that the definite article is connected to the word “truth.” It is *the* Truth that Paul is talking about. It is the objective truth, the body of divinity, the fundamentals of the Faith, Christian theology, the whole counsel of God, the Holy Scriptures.

When I was in Junior College, I had an Anglican divinity teacher telling us students that what the church needs today is not doctrine, but love. “Love unites, doctrine divides,” he said. “It doesn’t matter whether you have right or wrong views about the Bible, on Christ, or on salvation, as long as you have love, that is the most important because the greatest of these is love.” I questioned him, “Is this kind of love that is divorced from truth, truly love?” I quoted 1 Corinthians 13:6. The God who said “the greatest of these is love” also defined what love is when He said, “love rejoices not in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth.” He was dumbfounded.

The Bible is very clear. True love has no part with sin, evil, error, falsehood. The “iniquity” here refers to all that is against the Word of God, or anything that violates the commandments of God.

What is the world's definition of love? It is quite opposite from Paul's. It is a love that rejoices in iniquity and in error. In the world, love means saying OK to sin. It is tragic that the church today has adopted this definition. It is no surprise then that the church today ordains homosexual priests, sanctions gay marriages, and propagates a gospel that says everyone—believer or unbeliever—is on his or her way to heaven.

“Love unites, doctrine divides.” “Stop dividing, start loving,” the ecumenists say. How? Stop preaching the good news that *only Jesus saves*. Stop preaching narrow is the way that leads to life, and broad is the way that leads to destruction. Stop preaching Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life; no man comes unto the Father except through Him (John 14:6). Stop preaching that Jesus is the Only Way—there are many ways to God or to heaven.

This ecumenical slogan—“Love unites, doctrine divides”—is a lie that the devil wants all of us to believe today. It is tragic that Christians have bought into this lie, and have swallowed it hook, line and sinker. Proof of this is the “Evangelicals and Catholics Together” (ECT) document of 1994. In this document, prominent evangelicals like Bill Bright of Campus Crusade, and J I Packer of Regent College (Vancouver) say that the gospel preached by the Roman Catholic Church is the same gospel that the Protestant Church is preaching. The ECT document states, “We (viz, Evangelicals and Catholics) affirm together that we are justified by grace through faith because of Christ.” Sounds good, but utterly misleading and totally deceptive! Know your theology well! Know your theology inside and out! The Roman Catholics have no problems with this affirmation that “justification is by grace through faith because of Christ.” The Mormons, the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Seventh Day Adventists, have no problems with it either. Why? Because a key word is missing. There will be a division, a separation if you add this one word into the statement. The key word is the word “alone.” Ask the Pope: “Can you say Amen to a justification that is by grace *alone*, through faith *alone*, in Christ *alone*?” If he says Yes, he is no longer Catholic; he has become truly Protestant and evangelical. Luther, Calvin, Knox, and Zwingli all cried out in the 16th century Protestant Reformation: *Sola Fide* (Faith Alone), *Sola Gratia* (Grace Alone), *Solus Christus* (Christ Alone), and *Sola Scriptura* (Scripture Alone).

Tragically, in the name of love, evangelicals like Bill Bright and J I Packer are telling the Catholics they are saved: “You are my brother and

sister in Christ. I am on my way to heaven, and you are on the same road.” Is this love? Is it love to tell someone he is on his way to heaven when he is not?

Many people today say that the Catholic Church has changed since Vatican II. That is not true. The Catholic Church has not changed a single iota of her counter-Reformation decrees in the Council of Trent. In the Council of Trent (1545), the Catholic Church hurled 125 anathemas against Christians who believed salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, on Scriptures alone. Till today, the Catholic Church continues to uphold the tenets of the Council of Trent. Proof: Pope John XXIII in his opening statement at Vatican II said, “I do accept *entirely all* that has been decided and declared in the Council of Trent.” It is reported by the *Boston Globe* that Pope John Paul II on the occasion of the 350th anniversary of the Council of Trent in 1995 “upholds the work of the Council of Trent, offers *no concession* to the Protestants.” In other words, the 125 anathemas still apply.

Yet today, we have men like Bill Bright and J I Packer telling us that the Catholic Church has changed. Luther and Calvin must be turning in their graves. We are glad for the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals (ACE) that has arisen to resist this ecumenical deception. The Cambridge Declaration of 1996 by the ACE is a very strong statement against the ECT. Go to their website at <http://www.alliancenet.org> if you want to know more about this. See also the Reformation Day Statement of the Trinity Foundation at <http://www.trinityfoundation.org>.

Having said all this, I want to assure you that true biblical love does unite. It unites us to Christ and His Word. Do you love the Lord Jesus Christ? Jesus said, “If you truly love me, keep my commandments.” One commandment of the Lord is the command to be separated from sin, unbelief, and compromise. We are not to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers (2 Cor 6:14). True biblical love results in division or separation. If you love Christ and His Word, you will separate yourself from the world. If a husband loves his wife, he will keep his distance from all other women, and be intimate only with his wife. Jesus said that He has not come to send peace, but a sword, “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man’s foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or

mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it” (Matt 10:34-39).

Love divides! Light is light, darkness is darkness. There is a clear division. If you love the light, you must hate darkness.

The Corinthian church was a very problematic church, one of the main problems was that of disunity. There were factions within the church. In 1 Corinthians 1:11-13 we find Paul rebuking them for their divisive spirit. There was the Paul party, the Apollos party, the Cephas party, and the Christ party. And they were all fighting among themselves. Paul rebuked them: “Is Christ divided?” Paul appealed to them in verse 10: “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you: but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.”

How to become united as a church? Paul gives the answer: have the same mind and the same judgment in Christ based on God’s Word.

The Corinthians were influenced by the wisdom of the world instead of the wisdom of Christ. Paul told them to rid themselves of the wisdom of the world (vv 20-1). Imbibe instead the wisdom of God (vv 23-24). The wisdom of God is the Word of God, the Truth, the fundamental doctrines of the Christian Faith—the basics as well as the deep things of God.

Why division in the church? One reason is spiritual immaturity. The members of the Corinthian church were carnal, still babyish in their understanding of Scripture. So Paul rebuked them in chapter 3, “Why are you still baby-like in your faith? You have been Christians for so long; by now, you should be partaking of the meat of God’s Word, but you are still drinking milk. It is no wonder you still behave so childish with all the envying, strife and divisions in the church.”

In 2 Corinthians, we discover that the problem of division in the church was also due to false teachers. False teachers had infiltrated the church introducing unbiblical doctrines that led to confusion among members. If the Corinthian Christians were spiritually mature in God’s

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Word—knowing and applying the Word of God well—the divisions would not have resulted.

Doctrine, dear friends, unites. Confusion and division arise when church leaders and members do not have the same beliefs, convictions, positions on the Word of God. If the pastors in a church do not have the same mind and judgment, will there not be confusion and division? If members in the church are not well-grounded in the Faith, will they not be swayed to and fro when any and every wind of doctrine blows by? If we are not well-grounded in doctrine, how are we to distinguish between truth and error, to make a God-honouring decision based on His Word, to stand firm on the Truth?

I have students in the Bible College who shut their ears when I teach a doctrine they do not like to hear. Is this how you treat your pastors who teach you the Word of God? Walk out when you do not like what you hear? Paul says, “Study to show yourself approved unto God a workman that needeth not to be ashamed rightly dividing the Word of truth.”

I was once strongly against the doctrine of infant baptism. I did not walk out of class when my teachers spoke on infant baptism. I asked questions, I probed, I read books, I searched the Scriptures, I prayed, and I began to see.

Do not despise your pastors and teachers who labour hard, study hard, pray hard, and prepare hard to feed you with the Word of God. Paul said in Ephesians 4:11-12, “And he gave some, apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the *unity of faith*, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”

Usually those who cause divisions in the church are those who despise their pastors and teachers, who themselves do not want to spend the time and effort to study God’s Word, and to know the Truth. Having a little knowledge, they think they have already attained. Zeal without knowledge is a dangerous thing.

I urge you, dear friends, “Know the Truth, and the Truth shall make you free.” Our pastor—Rev Timothy Tow—says, “the Truth shall also make you see!” You have just received pastor’s latest book in defence of

our premillennial understanding of the 2nd coming of Christ. Do not let the sun set till you have completed reading it.

One practical step you can take is to commit yourself to study God's Word in evening courses offered by FEBC. I dare not issue a command, but I think if Paul were here, he would command all church leaders and Sunday School teachers to enrol in at least one evening course per semester, and take it for credit. I have made this suggestion before, and let me make it again. Maybe we should require all session members, Sunday School teachers and Bible Study leaders to earn their Certificate of Religious Knowledge (CertRK) from FEBC. Just earn 20 credits. A good teacher is a good student. There are many good things in store. Come and study!

I thank the Lord for some of our elders and deacons, Sunday school teachers and fellowship group leaders who take their ministry seriously and who take God's Word seriously by attending the night classes. How good it would be if we were to have a 100% commitment and attendance not only from our leaders but also members.

Doctrine does unite, but it behoves us to take time to study and know our doctrines well. There is no royal road to learning. We need to engage in an intensive systematic study of God's Word. A strong and healthy church consists of members deeply rooted in the Word of God, and in the love of God. Let's be of the same mind and judgment in the things of God, in the Word of God.

True love and biblical doctrine unite, but they also divide.

The above message was preached at Life Bible-Presbyterian Church on June 20, 1999, at the 10.30 am service.

ISRAEL'S CURRENT POSITION AND FUTURE PROSPECTS (II)

John Douglas

Israel's Future Prospects

We spoke previously about the current state of the people of Israel, cast away from God, abiding still in unbelief, but now we have a different prospect opening up to us in the Scriptures. We look at the nation at the time of our Lord's return.

In Jeremiah 31:10-11, we read, "Hear the word of the LORD, O ye nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock. For the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he."

These verses are full of great gospel words like "hear" and "declare." As we hear the Word of God, the Lord requires us to pass that Word on to others. We are not only to hear what the Lord is saying, but we must needs testify of His grace. You may be interested to observe that these verses are not addressed, as you might expect, to Israel, either in their state of unbelief, or in their time of restoration. These words are addressed to the Gentile peoples. The word "Gentile" has already been explained as those who do not belong to Jacob's stock. I make the presumption that all here are Gentiles. I can say without hesitation the preacher is a Gentile. And as a rule in our meetings we have a Gentile preacher, preaching to a Gentile congregation. Sometimes in the Bible the word "heathen" is the equivalent of the Gentiles, and sometimes the word "nation," or "nations" is the equivalent of the Gentiles. It is so in this place, and I will read verse 10 with that thought in mind, and you will see how this is the word addressed to all of us.

We Gentiles are in the Isles Afar Off

“Hear the word of the LORD, O ye Gentiles, and declare it in the isles afar off.” We can take the word “isles” literally and think, for example, of the British Isles, although this word “isles” takes in those countries inhabited by the Gentiles. If we were to think of ourselves, we are positioned on the earth far off from Jerusalem and the land of promise, so this is a wonderfully up-to-date Scripture. It is for us who meet to hear the word of the Lord. We recognise the divine origin of the Scriptures. This is the word of the Lord and we are to hear it. That means that we are to take it in as best we can. We must hide the word in our hearts and there must needs be the determination, God helping us, of obeying Him.

You will observe that the Lord is saying to the Gentiles that they may put Him to the test. Here is a promise which He will maintain. This word definitely will be fulfilled and if it is proclaimed in the isles of the Gentiles then some of them will be alive to see God’s prophetic word being fulfilled to the letter. That is precisely what is in view here. God expects us to take note of this because He wants us to see the fulfilment of His word.

“He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth His flock. For the LORD hath redeemed Jacob.” That is why He will gather and keep Israel as a shepherd does his flock—because He has redeemed Jacob. The Lord Jesus died for the Jew, as well as for the Gentile, He died for His own people and they must include those who belong to Jacob’s stock. The word “For” reminds us that God has a reason.

Because He has redeemed Jacob and ransomed him, therefore He could never forget or abandon Israel, and God has not forsaken His ancient people. The great gospel words are here, “hear” and “declare” and “gathered” and “kept.” The reference to the shepherd and that grand gospel word “redeemed,” and the one which follows, “ransomed,” the ransomed of the Lord. These are wonderful words and we need help from God as we gather around the Scriptures.

The Little Apocalypse of Jeremiah

There are four chapters in the book of Jeremiah which belong together—chapters 30-33. Those four chapters all have one subject and

that subject is the restoration of Israel. This section in the book of Jeremiah may be called “the little apocalypse.” Apocalypse is the name that we generally give to the last book in the Bible, the Book of the Revelation.

Apocalypse has a very interesting meaning. It is actually the English form of the Greek word translated Revelation. When we speak of the apocalypse, we are talking about a word which means Revelation, or, “the unveiling.” When we try to discern the future and look away to the years that yet lie ahead, it is as if those years are darkened by a veil and we cannot see clearly into that period which is still future to us. So God has graciously come to lift that veil and thus the appropriate name is given to the last book of the Bible, “the Book of the unveiling.” When God lifts this veil we can see things not seen as yet, and this is true of the four chapters in Jeremiah to which we have alluded. God lifts the veil on things to come. Such things we could never see left to ourselves and thus in the inspired volume, as God lifts this veil, we may be taught with certainty regarding those things to come.

Some of God’s people do not read the major prophets, like Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. They say that they find these prophecies difficult to understand. We have already noted that there are four chapters in Jeremiah exclusively relating to future times which may be called “the little apocalypse.” It is also true that there are four chapters in Isaiah, and four in Ezekiel, which could be described in this way. There is a particular emphasis put upon the little apocalypse in each one of these prophets.

The Literal Nature of the Prophecy

The emphasis in Jeremiah is on the grand theme of the future restoration of Israel. It would not do to talk about the restoration of Israel if some in our congregation are not clear that Israel is the people identified in the prophecies. So I do well, in the first place, to demonstrate that the Israel referred to here is that people who belonged to Jacob’s stock. If we can prove beyond any question that the Israel referred to in these four chapters is that Israel, that nation in the land of promise, then we shall be in a position, looking at these distinct prophecies, to say clearly this is God’s word regarding the future of that nation, although now it abides in unbelief.

The first proof is from *history*. Then we have a proof from the *holy city*. Lastly, we will talk about the *heavens*. These three lines of proof are absolutely simple and even someone who is not used to Bible study will be able to grasp these things which are drawn directly from the Scriptures themselves. *Look at Jeremiah 31:2. The words pertain to inspired history and that really is the only true history.* All other history may have a question mark put upon it. When we arrive in eternity and stand in the great judgment, we will discover many things about history we never dreamed had taken place. In a sense, history will be rewritten on the judgment day, because the history that we know in time, is man's warped version of it. Often his warped interpretation is far from the truth, and some of you will know when a local matter is mentioned in the national press that there are times when what the press has said is nothing like that which really has occurred. But in the Bible we have inspired history.

“Thus saith the LORD, The people which were left of the sword found grace in the wilderness; even Israel, when I went to cause him to rest” (Jer 31:2). The people who “found grace in the wilderness” may be clearly identified. There is no doubt this is Israel. In their past they were in the wilderness and when they were there, they found grace in the sight of God, and the Lord eventually gave that nation rest. That is to say, He eventually brought that people across the Jordan into the land of promise. Nothing could be simpler. This people—as inspired history describes them—are found in the wilderness and there they tasted of the grace of God; and eventually God has brought them from the wilderness, across the Jordan, into the land of rest, the land of Canaan. There is the proof from history, that the Israel spoken of in these verses is that Israel which we associate with the land of promise.

When we look at Jeremiah 31:38-40, *the holy city is in view*. That holy city is Jerusalem. In order to be specific, just to make sure that God's people do not have reason to spiritualise the reference to this city in such a way as to lose sight of the prophecy, God, by adding detail after detail, makes it impossible for any interpreter to get away from its literal force. A writer or interpreter who desires to spiritualise the word will find himself with an impossible task. “Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that the city shall be built to the LORD from the tower of Hananeel unto the gate of the corner.” This obviously cannot be spiritualised to mean the Church. These are exact locations. There they are all found in the city of Jerusalem.

ISRAEL'S CURRENT POSITION AND FUTURE PROSPECTS (II)

“And the measuring line shall yet go forth over against it upon the hill Gareb, and shall compass about to Goath.” The names—Gareb and Goath—may not mean a great deal to you, but suffice to say, these are place names identifiable with Jerusalem. In other words, God is talking about the city of Jerusalem in the land of promise. He is talking about Jerusalem down here and consequently the Israel mentioned in Jeremiah 31 and in the neighbouring portions is that people who have come from the stock of Jacob.

We look at verse 40. “And the whole valley of the dead bodies, and of the ashes, and all the fields unto the brook of Kidron, unto the corner of the horse gate.” You may at least remember references to this river, the brook of Kidron, being that river crossed by our Lord Jesus on the night of his betrayal. The Garden of Gethsemane lay across the river of Kidron and the Saviour coming from the city of Jerusalem, descended into the Kidron valley, crossed over that river, and ascended up the slopes of Olivet until He entered the Garden of Gethsemane where He was wont to pray with His own. The brook of Kidron very definitely, indisputably, beyond all argument, pertains to Jerusalem down here on this earth and nowhere else.

If anyone has studied the gates of the old city, the horse gate may be mentioned among the rest. The Scripture is saying that in a coming day all of this territory “shall be holy unto the LORD; it shall not be plucked up, nor thrown down any more, for ever.” Such a reference to the holy city is to the Jerusalem we can find on the map of Israel. Then I mentioned the heavens. “Thus saith the LORD, Which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, Which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The LORD of hosts is his name. “If those ordinances depart from before Me, saith the LORD, then the seed of Israel (*or the seed of Jacob, another way to put this is the descendants of Jacob, national Israel*) also shall cease from being a nation before Me for ever” (Jer 31:35-36).

God is saying here that as long as the sun continues to shine, and the moon illuminates the night sky, as long as the stars hang glistening in the infinity of the inky space, then He will preserve this nation for the fulfilment of His will upon this earth. On a dull, cloudy day you might doubt whether the sun is still shining, but it is, at least, daytime and you do not need to produce any truth that the sun is shining. You do not have to know the Bible from cover to cover to say that is so.

The three lines of proof are absolutely simple, so to anyone who is not a student of the Scripture, but never-the-less interested in the things of God, this could not be missed.

I Do Not Have to Prove the Sun Still Shines!

So I do not have to prove that the sun is still shining, not even in Northern Ireland where the rain comes down so bountifully, for at least one day in the year the sun peeps out from behind the clouds! There are lovely evenings when we leave our homes for a short walk. The sky indeed may be an inky black above us, but we can see those lovely stars twinkling in the heights of heaven and the moon is likewise there. You may not have thought about this as you took that moonlit stroll. There have been times when you have looked up in the darkness of the night and have admired the beauty of God's creation. You have seen there evidence of His handiwork and have praised God, but you have not gone far enough. That sun and that moon and the stars twinkling in the heavens above you are saying something else. According to Jeremiah 31:35-36, "If those ordinances depart ... then the seed of Israel also shall cease."

If you find yourself living on the earth and there is no longer a sun to shine, or a moon in the heavens, no longer any stars twinkling in the darkness on high, then you can start preaching that God has forgotten Israel. But the sun and the moon and the stars are still there, and God means what He says. There is the silent, beautiful witness in the heavens above. Remember that we have a message to the Gentiles in this chapter. God tells them that He has not forgotten His ancient people and He has put the stars, the moon, and the sun there to prove that His purpose for Israel still stands. When we open this book we should look at what God says.

It is a sad thing that many Christians fail to see the literal force of the words in the Bible. Well, no matter about men's ideas as to the systems of interpretation, there is no answer to the fact that the sun and the moon are still there, and so are the stars. God put this verse in the Bible to explain one reason for the stars, the moon and the sun. As long as you see those heavenly bodies, do not forget the promise made to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob.

So, inspired history, the holy city, which is Jerusalem, and the heavens all testify that the Israel spoken of here is indeed that people who have come from Jacob's line.

Israel's Restoration Involves a Return to Their Own Land

If we study Jeremiah 31 and like portions, we will see that the restoration spoken of involves a return to the land. It is hinted at in Jeremiah 31:10, "Hear the word of the LORD, O ye Gentiles, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, He that scattered Israel will gather him." So, as Israel was scattered as a people from the land across the face of the earth, so God says with certainty He will gather again His ancient people to their own land. The return of Israel to their own land is part and parcel of their restoration, which return, at first, is in unbelief.

There is an unique beginning to the little apocalypse in Jeremiah. Before God begins to talk about the return of His people, He stresses the fact that this prophecy must be taken as Scripture, thus having divine authority, at least seven times in Jeremiah 30:1-5. This is why I say it is unique. Before He gets underway at all, God says that He is saying this. Let me paraphrase these first five verses. God is at pains to say to His people: I am saying this, please be aware of this, this is My word, I am saying it. With that kind of reiteration, going over the simple fact again and again, this is what God is saying, how many times must the Lord tell us before we take it in? It is disturbing when born again people, washed in the Blood and bound for glory find that it is difficult to take it in. I will number these emphatic occurrences.

We would have known with our views of Scripture that Jeremiah 30, in any case, is the word of the Lord. The Lord would not need to tell us except He has a reason for emphasising the point.

Seven Lines of Irrefutable Truth Which Call for a Literal Interpretation

- (1) "*The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD*" (30:1)
- (2) "*Thus speaketh the LORD God of Israel*" (30:2)
- (3) "*Write thee all the words that I have spoken*" (30:2)
- (4) "*For, lo, the days come, saith the LORD*" (30:3)—and that little word "lo" is the direct equivalent of the word "behold." So these happen to be two English forms of the same Hebrew term. You are entitled to read it, Behold, the word "behold" is intended to take your attention. The Lord is saying look at this, study this, get a hold of this.

- (5) “I will bring again the captivity of My people Israel and Judah, *saith the LORD*: and I will cause them to return to the land” (30:3). So if we are going to talk about the restoration of Israel we have to consider their return to the land. What we are talking about is Scriptural. It is in the Bible. The word of God is abundantly clear in this matter. They will “return to the land that I gave to their fathers and they shall possess it.” No matter about the furore among the nations. No matter about who wants to quibble over it. I have given this land to their fathers and I will cause the seed of Jacob to possess it.
- (6) “These are the words that *the LORD spake*” (30:4). Now comes the repetition once more. The Lord shows Himself at great pains to get us to take it in and accept the Scripture literally as it stands. What does the Lord have to do for people who insist on giving a spiritual interpretation to something that has a literal fulfilment!
- (7) “For *thus saith the LORD*; We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace” (30:5).

The words introduce the unstable times to be experienced when the nation comes back to the land in unbelief and those times build up in certain and awesome tension until verse 7 materialises: “Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob’s trouble.” (Sometimes called, the time of the great tribulation.)

The Tribulation Time

The great tribulation in Jeremiah 30:7 is called “the time of Jacob’s trouble.” So the tribulation will centre for intensity in the land of Israel. “It is the time of Jacob’s trouble; but he shall be saved out of it.” God will preserve a people for His name, through that most troublous time, the like of which the world has never seen. So when God says in verse 5, “We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace,” we may consider that the false peace is used as a front to cover over the tensions in the land. We may remind ourselves of the fear people have felt with more or less intensity in the times which are past and contrast those things with that which are yet to come. God has spoken here of the return of the nation. He says just as He scattered Israel, so will He also gather him.

We cannot say this speaks of the Church. We cannot spiritualise the words out of all proportion, because the Church was not scattered out of

some land, and God certainly is not going to gather the Church back to a given land. No, it can only apply to Israel, and the restoration of Israel involves a return to the land.

Israel's Restoration Pertains Also to the End Time

Consider these words, "Behold, the whirlwind of the LORD goeth forth with fury, a continuing whirlwind: it shall fall with pain upon the head of the wicked. The fierce anger of the LORD shall not return, until he have done it, and until he have performed the intents of his heart" (Jer 30:23-24).

I take the words here to describe the coming again of Jesus Christ. I see my Saviour return in power and great glory in the clouds of heaven that He may deal in judgment with the head of the wicked. The tribulation is brought into being on account of the activity of the antichrist who is referred to in the words "the head of the wicked." He himself is the consummation of all wickedness, as these words imply, and he seeks to hold in his hand the reins of government over the peoples of the Roman earth in particular. The Lord will vent his anger. The Lord will show forth His wrath until He has performed the intents of His heart and even in that matter the word of God will be fulfilled to the letter.

Now there is a little pointer to time, "*in the latter days ye shall consider it.*" So then, in the last days of this age, we may expect the coming of the Lord. We will see antichrist put down with the power and the great glory of the Lord Jesus Himself. These things pertain to the latter days. Now this is where the restoration of Israel comes in. Some people may ask, if God is going to bring Israel back, when will these events occur? Let us follow on where we have been reading. It is all so graphic.

"At the same time" (Jer 31:1). At the same time as what? At the same time as the Lord's coming, God will destroy the head of the wicked. At the very same time when God is performing the intents of His heart. "*In those days*" (end of Jer 30), "*at the same time*" (beginning of Jer 31), "*I will be the God of all the families of Israel and they shall be my people*" (Jer 31:1). So everything falls into place. We know now when to expect the restoration of Jacob's stock. Israel will be converted. The elect of that nation will look to the Lord when He appears. Confessedly there has never been a time in history when God was the God of all the families

of Israel. This specifically belongs to the future. This is a glorious thing. We may be encouraged by these words.

The Restoration Means God Will be God of All the Families of Israel

God says here quite explicitly, “at that time.” It is indeed “At the same time, saith the LORD, will I be the God of *all* the families of Israel, and they shall be My people.” I am making the point that never in the history of the Jewish people has God been the God of *all* their families. He has been the God of some of the families. There is no question of that. But never yet in history has God been the God of all the families. I take this verse as it stands. I am looking for a perfect fulfilment. For have we not read already that the Lord shall perform the intents of his heart?

You consider Israel in the past. They murmured against Moses. In fact they were ready to stone the man who gave up so much for them. I would suppose that in the days of Moses one could view Israel at its best as a nation, and yet even then Moses complained bitterly of their rebelliousness—they were so ready to stone him and replace him with another captain who would take them back to Egypt. They slandered and rebuffed Jeremiah. They disobeyed Nehemiah. They stoned the Apostles. They crucified the Lord. There never was a time in the history of this notable people when God was the God of all the families of Israel, but there is a time when He will be. Someone may say that “all” may not mean “all,” thus intending to put a question mark over what the Scripture says in Jeremiah 31:1. Let us go a little further. Look at verse 33 where God says, “I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts.” So in conversion, in this grand work of regeneration described here, God will make His ancient people His own in truth, and He says that He “will be their God and they shall be My people.”

I am saying “all” means “all,” and that God will be the God of all the families of Israel. We may say with all authority that the Lord means what he says. “And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, “Know the LORD: for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more” (31:34). The day when the Lord will ransom His people is steadily moving on apace.

ISRAEL'S CURRENT POSITION AND FUTURE PROSPECTS (II)

I suppose Christian people here know something about outreach work. You may decide with a group of Christians to visit a certain street. So you go from door to door, maybe trembling, maybe a bit uncertainly, maybe with a thought that you will have a stammering tongue, but just the same you go. It would be strange if knocking at the first door you had an answer, "Oh, you have come with the Bible, you love the Lord, you are saved, and you believe the gospel; well, praise the Lord, we are all saved in this house." What a joy that would be to your heart, and you would say, "Thank God, I am glad I came tonight." A word from a Christian and in fact a word from a Christian family would be like that, like an oasis in a desert. You go on to the next door and you press the door bell, or you use the knocker. People come and they say, "Oh, you represent the Lord Jesus, you love the Saviour." You say, "Certainly I do and I am here to speak about the Lord and what His grace means to me." "Well, come in, we are so delighted to see you. We are all saved in this house and that is a marvellous thing." You go to the next door until you visit the whole street and you find that you do not have an instance where you have to say to somebody, "Would you like to know the Lord?" This is what the verse says. Go over it again just to be sure that you can see it for yourself. "And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother (*among the stock of Jacob, in the land of promise in that day*), Know the Lord: for they shall all know Me."

That is a lovely thing. They are all saved. They are all washed in the Blood of the Lamb. They are all singing the praises of our Blessed Redeemer. They shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. I ask any child of God: Was there ever a time in the past when God did this for Israel? There never was and because God will keep His word precisely to the letter, this is all future. God is saying here, "I will do it. I will perform the intents of My heart and when I do so I will multiply them." If you would like the reference, it is Jeremiah 30:19. "I will multiply them, and they shall not be few; I will also glorify them, and they shall not be small."

We are not talking about a handful of converts. We are speaking of a national restoration and we do well to go to Isaiah 66. We are talking about a multitude gathered into the kingdom of grace from the stock of Jacob. Look at Isaiah 66:8.

Who has ever heard of a whole country turning to the Lord in a single day? It is marvellous what God will yet do. No wonder we have

said with a lot of feeling, the great revival is still future. When you look at this verse, “Who hath heard such a thing?” To some Christians it is incredible. “Who hath seen such things?” Never once in all history has such a thing been done. It still is future. “Shall the earth (*or the land*) be made to bring forth in one day?” The answer is “yes.” “Shall a nation (*a whole nation*) be born at once?” The answer is “yes.” “For as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children.”

This is God’s work, incredible as it may seem. It is just beyond belief that God would do such a wonderful thing by His matchless grace, but He said that He will do it.

The Restoration of Israel Will be Brought About by the Holy Spirit

The restoration of Israel will be brought about by the Holy Spirit at the coming of the Lord. Look at Zechariah 12:9-10, “And it shall come to pass in that day (*this is the day of Lord’s return*), that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.”

Every Christian has heard of the gathering of the nations in Armageddon in an evil confederacy intending to come to the land, that they might solve, once and for all, the Jewish problem, as they see it. They wish to annihilate the Jewish nation. But God says, “I will handle them. I will destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem and it does not matter what mighty nation is represented there.” You can take your choice of any of the nations of the earth and all of the munitions that evil men have within their power, but God says to all that, “I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.” Any man who sets foot in the great valley of Armageddon is doomed. Any man who sets foot in the land of Israel to be part of that confederacy, to rise up against Jerusalem, to make war against Israel, is doomed. For God will “destroy all the nations (*Gentiles*), that come against Jerusalem.” Would you like to be among that serving force?

But Israel will be converted then as well. “And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications.” The Holy Spirit will not be gone from the earth. No, rather He will be here and this occurs at the end of the tribulation, the consummation of that time of Jacob’s trouble, the like of which the world has never seen. And far from the Holy Spirit being absent we see Him

wholly active. In fact, when we consider the prophetic Scriptures, all those references that mention the Holy Spirit pertain to a period still future. The time of the tribulation, the Spirit of God on the earth, the Instrument of conviction bringing those who are in Israel to look upon Him in the day of His coming. So, in that hour when Jesus comes to the tribes of Israel, nobody will be saved in a different way from other people. They will be saved the same way, by the Holy Spirit working in their heart, revealing Christ to them, that He is the Messiah, He is the Saviour and He will give to them the look of faith. The Scripture says here, "They shall look upon Me."

Remember that the reference to the Holy Spirit demonstrates that it is by the agency of the Spirit of God that those who belong to the elect of Israel shall look upon Jesus Christ "Whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him." Now comes the discovery. The penny drops! They can see that Christ is the Messiah rejected by the nation. They shall see the One Who was crucified at Calvary as the One Whom they have pierced. They will see the nail prints in His hands. What a mourning in that day in Jerusalem! So we can understand that God for a certainty will revive Israel and restore them, bringing them back, first of all, to their own land in unbelief. Then eventually as they pass through that dreadful time, called in the Scriptures "the time of Jacob's trouble," the time of the great tribulation, that period will be consummated by the return of our Lord Jesus in power and in great glory.

The Restoration Takes Place at the Advent of the Saviour

Zechariah 14 follows on in continuity from where we have been reading. "Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, ... For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; ... Then shall the LORD go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fought in the day of battle. And His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives" (14:1-4).

The Lord is coming back again and upon Olivet itself the King shall stand in the fullness of His glory. He will deal with the nations of the earth. These are powerful Scriptures. Jerusalem will be changed topographically, as this chapter indicates. The Dead Sea will change its character. Best of all, the nation itself will be totally transformed.

It is interesting to see how people like to use Bible names. Sometimes our children get Bible names. There may be a dwelling with the name "Hebron," or "Bethel." You may find the word "Zion."

Someone wants his dwelling to be associated with Zion and it is a Bible word. It should give some association with the land of promise. But the person may never have really thought about the meaning of the name. You could look up “Zion” in a good Old Testament lexicon which covers the meanings of Hebrew words. But you do not have to go that far, for Zion is explained in Jeremiah. When we go to the Scriptures, we find that Zion does not have a very impressive connotation, for it says, “an Outcast, saying, This is Zion whom no man seeketh after” (Jer 30:17).

The name Zion means “the wilderness, complete desolation.” All these years, God has allowed this name to be employed with reference to Jerusalem, to impress upon the Christian public that they have not really seen Jerusalem. But one day, Jerusalem is going to be the perfection of beauty. But she is not now. At present she is an outcast. That is to say, no man seeketh after her. Who wants to be identified with the current Prime Minister of Israel? Who wants to stand unashamedly with Israel? No man seeketh after Israel. Zion is an outcast and there is rather a great deal of sympathy with those who want to bring Israel down. Look at Isaiah 51. “The LORD shall comfort Zion: He will comfort all her waste places.”

The Lord knows the meaning of Bible words. He put them in the Bible. He Who is the Author of these words created the Hebrew language. He knows well the meaning of every term He employs, and He knows the meaning of “Zion.” And He says, that at present, men see Zion (outcast).

The Land to be Renewed and Multitudes Blessed at This Restoration

But He adds, “He will comfort all her waste places; and He will make her wilderness like Eden.” What is Eden? The Garden of Eden was paradise. A wilderness changed by the miracle working power of our God into a paradise on earth, just like the garden of Eden! This is Zion—the waste place, the wilderness and the desert “like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody” (Isa 51:3).

That is the miracle of Israel’s restoration, when Zion, the outcast whom nobody wanted, will be altogether changed. “Thus saith the LORD of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him

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that is a Jew; saying, We will go with you; for we have heard that God is with you" (Zech 8:23).

If anybody now lays hold on a Jew, they are not going to say, "We believe God is with you and we want to go with you." They are more likely to lay hold on him and do him an injury. When the Lord comes back and changes Israel, changes the country, changes them and changes Jerusalem too, it will all be different. It is the presence of Christ which makes a man desirable. We want to be with the people who are near to the Lord and that is the way of joy and gladness.

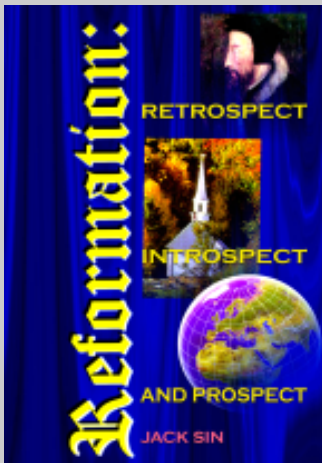
"And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob" (Isa 2:2-3). That is revival, restoration by the Lord.

Jerusalem, and Israel with it, is now passing through a season of turmoil and uneasiness. Oftentimes a bomb goes off, or an annihilation occurs, there is a grave dug, another shot has been fired, another son of Jacob has gone down into death. One may visit Israel. It is always the joy to the Christian to be there. Count it a privilege if you are able to go. Everywhere you go, if you meet Jewish people, you will hear them give you the word of greeting, "Shalom," or when they are saying goodbye, this same word of greeting is again used, "Shalom," which means peace. It is even said that the name Jerusalem may in its extended form be Jehovah Shalom, or Jireh Shalom, the city of peace.

There is no peace with the open grave, the coffin, the lamentation, the broken heart. This verse in the Bible, Jeremiah 31:40 says that one of these days that same city of Jerusalem, "shall be holy unto the LORD, it shall not be plucked up (*in battle*), nor thrown down any more for ever." That day has not yet come. Shots are still being fired. There is no peace in the land of Shalom and there cannot be until the Lord comes back. It is great to know the Lord is coming!

An old servant of God many years ago gave a Christian three rules of life and he said in his advice, (1) Live as if Jesus Christ was crucified yesterday, (2) As if He rose again today, and (3) As if He is coming again tomorrow. May the Word of God and the joy of knowing Him be an up-to-date experience.

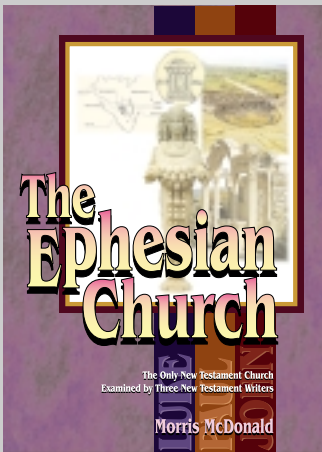
Dr John Douglas is principal of the Whitefield College of the Bible in Northern Ireland. This was the second of two messages delivered at the SGAT conference at Burry Port, South Wales, in October 1997. Used by permission from Sovereign Grace Advent Testimony, 1 Donald Way, Chelmsford, Essex CM2 9JB, UK.



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THE MILLENNIAL TEMPLE

Prabhudas Koshy

Temples of the Past

The Bible tells us that there were two temples in the past. The first temple in Jerusalem was built by Solomon which was eventually destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon in 586 BC. Some 70 years later, Jewish exiles who returned to Jerusalem, under the leadership of Zerubbabel, built the second temple and the walls of the city. This second temple was greatly enlarged and expanded by Herod the Great who recruited about 10,000 labourers to work on the second temple. It was in this latter temple that Jesus was dedicated. There He taught the Jews many a time and cast out the money-changers on two occasions. Jesus also predicted its destruction: “And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you. There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down” (Matt 24:1-2). Likewise the second temple was destroyed in AD 70 by the Roman general—Titus.

The Temple Mount of the Present

Since AD 70, the Jews have no temple. This situation was predicted by Hosea the prophet in 746 BC: “For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim: Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD their God, and David their king; and shall fear the LORD and his goodness in the latter days.”

In AD 634, the temple mount was taken over by the Muslims. In 1099, the crusaders captured it and turned the mosques into churches. Saladin returned it to Arab rule in 1187. The Jews liberated the temple mount from Jordanian control in the Six-Day War of 1967, but later

returned it to the custody of the Muslim Waqf (Jordan). Today, the “Dome of the Rock” is situated near the centre of the temple mount, with the Al Aqsa Mosque at its southern end.

Temples of the Future

There are generally two views among Bible-believing scholars concerning the number of future temples in Jerusalem. The first view says that there will only be one temple, and it will be built during Christ’s millennial rule. The second view believes that there will be two temples in Jerusalem. The first will exist in the seven-year tribulation period, and the second in the millennial period.

The Tribulation Temple

It is clearly taught in the Scriptures that during the tribulation period there will be a place of sacrifice for the Jews which will eventually be desecrated by the Antichrist. In Daniel 9:27 we read that the Antichrist (“the prince”) “shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: *and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease*, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.” The word “week” literally means “seven.” In the context of this verse it refers to a seven-year period which will begin when Antichrist makes a covenant with the Jews. But in the middle of that period (ie, after three and a half years), he will break his covenant with the Jews by putting an end to their sacrifices, and desecrating their place of worship. Though the word “temple” does not appear in Daniel 9:27, other Scripture portions that deal with the last days clearly indicate the presence of a “temple” in Jerusalem. Jesus in His message on the end times foretold that the “abomination of desolation,” already mentioned in Daniel 9:27, shall desecrate “the holy place” (Matt 24:15).

What could Jesus have meant by the phrase “the holy place?” In the only other New Testament passage where the phrase is used, it plainly refers to the temple itself (Acts 21:28). David also referred to the temple as the Lord’s holy place (Ps 24:3). Moreover, in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4, Paul said that the Antichrist will desecrate the temple: “Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is

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worshipped; so that *he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.*” Therefore we conclude that there will be a temple in Jerusalem during the tribulation period as predicted by Daniel, Jesus, and Paul.

According to Dr Timothy Tow, the rebuilding of the temple requires a God-given mandate. God gave His mandate to Solomon and Zerubbabel/Joshua to build the first and second temples respectively (1 Chron 28, Zech 4). Insofar as the third or tribulation temple is concerned, God gave no mandate for any of Israel’s descendents to build it. Dr Tow suggests that the “temple” the Antichrist will desecrate is probably the Jerusalem Great Synagogue (see his book, *Prophescope on Israel* [Singapore: Far Eastern Bible College Press, 1992], 119-22).

The Millennial Temple

There will be another temple during the millennial reign of Christ. We read in Zechariah, *“Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD: Even he shall build the temple of the LORD; and he shall bear the glory and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both”* (Zech 6:12-13).

The temple mentioned in the above prophetic revelation is not yet built. It is clearly stated that the temple of this prophecy is to be built by none other than “the Branch,” which is Jesus Christ. In several prophetic passages Christ is referred to as “the Branch” who will sit on the throne of David to rule the world. “And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots” (Isa 11:1). “Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth” (Jer 23:5). In Luke, the angel Gabriel proclaimed, “He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end” (Luke 1:32-33). We know that none of the first three temples was built by the Branch—the Lord Jesus Christ—who is yet to come to rule from the throne of David. Therefore we can expect a fourth temple to be built when Christ returns.

Ezekiel's Prophecy of the Millennial Temple

The fourth temple that will be built in the millennial rule of Christ is also known as "Ezekiel's Temple," for the temple and its system of worship are described in great detail by Ezekiel the prophet (Ezek 40-46). Some interpreters reject the literal meaning of Ezekiel 40-48, and view the description as figurative of the New Testament Church. They go to great lengths to explain away the measurements and specifications of the temple building. Such a figurative view seem forced. A natural reading of the text points to a literal physical temple. The golden rule of interpretation is: "When the plain sense makes good sense, seek no other sense."

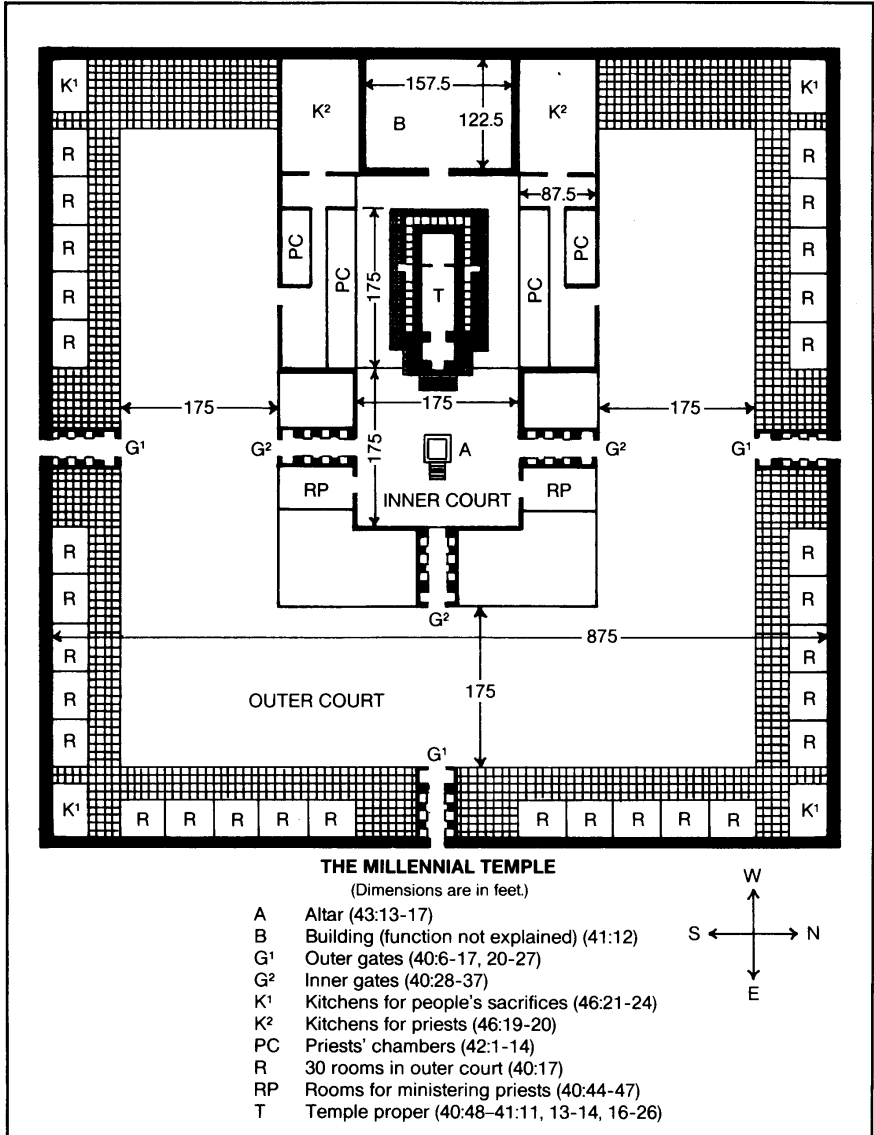
Some suggest that the plans were for a temple to replace the first temple which had been destroyed by the Babylonians. But the structure of the second temple does not match the one described in Ezekiel 40-46. The natural conclusion is that Ezekiel's record of the temple is prophetic. Since this prophecy of the temple is set in the context of Israel's national and spiritual restoration at the beginning of the millennium, we conclude that it is a millennial temple. Moreover, other prophetic books also reveal facts about the existence of a temple and the offering of sacrifices in the millennium.

Dr John Walvoord provides a brief description of the millennial temple: "As described in Ezekiel (40:5-42:20), the outer dimensions of the temple complex will form a square, 875 feet (500 cubits) across and in length. The temple faces east, as did the tabernacle and the temples of Solomon and of the Exile. The south, east, and north sides have an outer wall. Thirty rooms were also built on the second and third levels. The temple itself was projected from inside the western wall, it had outer courts on three sides—south, east, and north, 175 feet in width. The rooms inside the temple area were assigned to their respective uses, including the temple proper in the centre with an inner court in front of it extending to the east."

Besides Ezekiel 40-46, there are other prophecies in the Bible that talk about a millennial temple. Consider the following prophecies:

(1) "Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the LORD, to serve him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant; Even them *will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them*

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Charles H Dyer, "Ezekiel," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, ed John F Walvoord and Roy B Zuck (Colorado Springs: Chariot Victor Publishing, 1985), 1303.

joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people. The Lord GOD which gathereth the outcasts of Israel saith, Yet will I gather others to him, beside those that are gathered unto him” (Isa 56:6-8).

(2) “In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land. In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The LORD our righteousness. For thus saith the LORD; David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel: *Neither shall the priests the Levites want a man before me to offer burnt offerings, and to kindle meat offerings, and to do sacrifice continually”* (Jer 33:15-18).

(3) “For in mine holy mountain, in the mountain of the height of Israel, saith the Lord GOD, there shall all the house of Israel, all of them in the land, serve me: there will I accept them, and *there will I require your offerings, and the firstfruits of your oblations, with all your holy things. I will accept you with your sweet savour*, when I bring you out from the people, and gather you out of the countries wherein ye have been scattered; and I will be sanctified in you before the heathen” (Ezek 20:40).

(4) “And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles” (Zech 14:16).

What will the future millennial temple be like?

(1) *It will be a temple like no other.* No building has even been built like the one described in Ezekiel 40:1–46:24. This fact proves that it still has to be in the future.

(2) *The temple will be filled with Lord’s glory.* Ezekiel describes a picture of the “glory of the Lord” entering into his temple, which he had previously seen as departing the temple of his day (Ezek 43:1-5 cf, 11:23).

(3) *The temple will be the place of the Lord’s throne.* Ezekiel also wrote about the voice of God that declared that this temple will be “the place of

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my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever ..." (Ezek 43:7).

(4) *There will be feasts and sacrifices.* In Ezekiel 44 burnt offerings and sin offerings and trespass offerings are mentioned (40:39). The bullock, the he-goat, and the ram are to be offered (43:19-25). The blood is to be sprinkled on the altar (43:18). The meal offering is also incorporated (42:13). Morning sacrifices will be offered daily (46:13). The priests who are Levites are to officiate (43:19). Moreover, several feasts will also be instituted. The Passover feast will be observed again (45:21-25), and annually the feast of tabernacles will be commemorated (45:25). The year of Jubilee will be observed too (43:4-5).

It appears that the millennial sacrificial order is very similar to the Aaronic sacrificial order. However there are many significant differences between them. In the new millennial order some of the significant features of the old sacrificial system will be changed or deleted. Not only has the measurement of the temple changed, the holy places have hardly anything like the furniture that stood in the tabernacle of Moses or the temple of Solomon. We also observe that not all Levites will serve as priests, but only the sons of Zadok. (Zadok was a priest who was loyal to David and Solomon in times of rebellion against their rule. Zadok thus stands representative of the priesthood in association with the king of God's choice, and with the millennial kingdom as established by Him in David's seed.) The Zadokian priesthood in the millennium thus differs significantly from the Aaronic.

It is also significant to note that many things that were part of the earlier temples are not mentioned as being part of the future. For example, there is no ark of the covenant, no pot of manna, no rod of Aaron, no tables of the Law, no cherubim, no mercy-seat, no golden candlestick, no shewbread, no veil, no unapproachable Holy of Holies where the high priest alone might enter, no high priest, no evening sacrifice, etc.

Although those things are absent, there are new things added to the millennial temple and its order. They are the glory of the Lord entering and abiding forever, the living waters that flow from beneath the altar, wonderful trees of healing, new distribution of land according to the 12 tribes, etc.

How can a sacrificial system exist when Christ has already died to atone for sins? There are those who object to a sacrificial system in the

millennium. Their argument is that the idea of a sacrificial system in the millennium would mean that Christ's atoning death was insufficient. It would be a reinstatement of a system that was abolished by Christ's death. In answer to this, it must be made clear that animal sacrifices are not necessary for salvation. In the Old Testament none was saved by trusting in animal sacrifices. The sacrifices served only as types and symbols. They point to Christ and His death. Similarly, in the millennium, none would be trusting in animal sacrifices for atonement. The Scripture clearly teaches that it is only when the Jews repent and look to Jesus as their only Redeemer that they are delivered from all their sins and tribulations. The millennial sacrifices do not save. They function as *reminders*. They remind people of what Christ had already done on the cross.

Those who object to a millennial temple believe that the Old Testament sacrifices which have been abrogated in the church age would never be reinstated. But, as we have noted earlier, it is not correct to say that the millennial sacrificial system is exactly the same as that of the Old Testament. There are similarities and differences. The marked differences show us that the millennial sacrifices will be unique and distinct in their features (see Ezek 40:1–46:24; Isa 56:7; 66:20-23; Jer 33:18; Zech 14:16-21; Mal 3:3-4). However, the purpose is the same—not to offer a means of salvation, but to serve as a memorial of Christ's death. Therefore the millennial sacrifices will not minimise but maximise the importance and necessity of the cross-work of Christ.

There is another objection to a literal millennial temple in Jerusalem. The question is raised: Is it not impossible to build a temple of Ezekiel's description at the ancient site? It is true that the temple area described by Ezekiel is larger than that of the ancient temple. However, Scripture records that the topography of Jerusalem would change when Christ returns. For instance, the Mount Olives will split open, making a valley that runs through the land from east to west (Zech 14:4). This surely would provide the space necessary for the millennial temple.

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College News

The **new academic term** opened on July 19, 1999 with 28 new students from 10 countries: Aldous Kent Limosnero (Philippines), An Sitha (Cambodia), Cheng Heng Fook (Singapore), Choi Ko Eun (Korea), Merlin Chung (Indonesia), Christian Kendagor (Kenya), Daryl Elibert Susano Kabingue (Philippines), George Tenkorang (Ghana), Ha Hye Young (Korea), Ho Chee Lai (Malaysia), Janpen Jantakhad (Thailand), June Tan Mei Lan (Singapore), Lau Ting Eng (Malaysia), Lee Jong Bae (Korea), Jane Lim Chok Lang (Singapore), Lim Seo Young (Korea), Park Hye Keun (Korea), Park Jong Gyoo (Korea) Quek Keng Khwang (Singapore), Rasmalem Raya Sembiring (Indonesia), Penpim Sanmeuang (Thailand), Charlene Sia Chi Chen (Singapore), Song Suk Kyoung (Korea), Sun Sokha (Cambodia), Tjun Tjun (Indonesia), Peter Wong (Brunei), Yenni (Indonesia), Yoon Jin Young (Korea).

The **Life BPC/FEBC website**—<http://www.lifefebc.com>—is voted top 50 out of 30,000 Asian websites by Asiaco. **Loi Huey Ching** (MRE '98) is webmaster. Her husband—Quek Keng Khwang—is now a first year MDiv student.

The **college library** has recently installed a couple of internet computers. Students now have access to information contained in cyberspace for their research.

The Christian education class organised a **college outing** to the National Museum, and Fort Canning Park on September 3, '99. Faculty and students enjoyed a blessed time of learning and fellowship.

The FEBC **Gospel Meeting** was held on October 9, 1999. Rev Goh Seng Fong—lecturer in pastoral ministry—preached on “What is Life?”

The Burning Bush continues to be a source of edification for God's people around world. Jan Lee from Australia wrote: “I thank the Lord for your most recent issue of *The Burning Bush* (July 1999, Vol 5 No 2). For in it, the Holy Spirit leads the reader to God's holy truth. I am a recent convert from Arminianism, and I want to thank the Lord for His election unto salvation. I was blind and totally depraved, but now by His grace I see. The Christian brother I met at a hawker centre while passing through Singapore recently told me of your web page and about *The Burning Bush* publication. I am so happy that God has preserved His elect in delivering the true Gospel to His people.” *Soli Deo Gloria!*

THE PASTORAL THEOLOGY OF JOHN CALVIN

Mark Ryan

Introduction: More Than a Systematician

Having completed a brief literary review of the life and work of the 16th century Protestant Reformer—John Calvin—esteemed theologian and true Evangelical statesman B B Warfield closed his account with these words: “We may surely add that from Luther the Reformer to our day God has given His church no greater man than John Calvin.”¹ Famous for the immensity of his contribution and the variety of his work, Calvin spent the best part of his life carrying out the offices of theologian, churchman, organiser of Protestantism in France, founder of the Academy of Geneva, public lecturer, Bible commentator, preacher at St Peter’s, and correspondent to kings, queens and noted political and ecclesiastical leaders.²

Within this framework of Calvin’s enormous capacity to accomplish such important work, it has become usual to focus upon his system of thought as opposed to his own practice. More specifically, historians and theologians have usually viewed Calvin as the great systematician of the Reformation. This has rendered statements such as the following almost legion: “Calvin’s influence on Protestant thought was literally stupendous, due largely to his transcendent ability as a theologian.”³ And “Without any doubt, the most important systematiser of Protestant theology in the 16th century was John Calvin. While Luther was the daring trail-blazer for the movement, Calvin was the careful thinker who bound the various Protestant doctrines into a cohesive whole.”⁴

Primarily praised for his theological skill and acumen (and rightly so), it is my contention that John Calvin should be looked to not just for his classical doctrinal formulations, but also for the way in which he integrated his theology with the practicalities of pastoral ministry. Even though it is Calvin’s theology which is most frequently the subject of

scholarly debate, of doctoral dissertations, and of countless journal articles, surely it is Calvin's pastoral heart and its "lived out" expression in his own ministrations for the Lord, and for the people of Geneva, that must also commend him to us in our day of such marked decline in church leadership.

Though very much a theologian, yet Calvin was ever more the pastor. For John Calvin, theology was not an end in itself, but a means to an end. Theology was to function as the servant of piety and the handmaiden of true holiness.⁵ For Calvin, an understanding of the deep things of God was not a place to stop, but the place to truly begin. Read Calvin himself and you will soon see this, as his thought is always directed towards life and always he descends from principles to practice. Therefore, to understand Calvin as a pastor is, I believe, to find that which truly unifies and underlies all his work, as titanic and diverse as it is.⁶

In light of this, my intention in the pages which follow is to explore the pastoral theology of John Calvin. But because I want to see him as more than a systematician, my plan is not only to set forth those central elements of his pastoral theology (as he has set them forth in his *Institutes* for us), but also to attempt to illustrate them from Calvin's own life. Although, admittedly, I will be forced to paint with rather broad brush strokes, yet I wish to discuss these three related issues: the office of the pastor in Calvin's thought; the duties of the pastor in Calvin's thought; and then, to look at Calvin as a pastor, thereby holding him up to the light of his own understanding and stated ideas. My hope in doing this and in moving beyond just a straight examination of his theology is, that those of us who wish to identify with Calvin in our doctrine might be encouraged not only to study him afresh, but to actually go further and imitate him in practice.⁷

The Pastoral Office in the Thought of John Calvin

Being somewhat of a rarity in his day, the Genevan Reformer held the office of pastor in high regard. In spite of his own initial reluctance to become involved in pastoral ministry, Calvin still saw the office in the best possible way, recognising at once its necessity and importance.⁸ As we would expect, Calvin saw Christ to be the Head of the Church and held that He alone has the right and the power to reign in and over the church. However, as He is now ascended and invisible to us, Christ has chosen to use the ministry of men to accomplish His purposes in our

midst.⁹ Now whilst emphasising that God is in no way reliant upon men to occupy such an office (being Himself well able to carry out His own work),¹⁰ yet Calvin spoke insightfully of the reasons why God preferred to operate through such fallible means, thereby bringing status and considerable significance to the pastoral office. According to Calvin, these reasons included: it being a way for God to declare His regard for us; its providing us with “the best and most useful exercise of humility,” as He calls upon us to obey His Word even though it is preached to us through men like ourselves; and, also, that nothing fosters mutual love more fittingly than our being gathered together and instructed under one appointed as pastor.¹¹

For Calvin, the office of pastor was the first of four offices instituted by the Savior for the government of His church.¹² And as already hinted at above, although the other offices of doctor, elder and deacon are all presented as being vitally important for the ordering of the church, and even though they each receive thorough treatment in his writings,¹³ yet it is fair to say that it was the pastoral office that stood out as being of prime importance. This divinely sanctioned office was seen by Calvin to be “necessary to preserve the church on earth”¹⁴ and, therefore, though an office of great weight and privilege,¹⁵ it was an office to be occupied with the utmost seriousness and faithfulness. In light of this, Calvin upheld the biblical requirements for ecclesiastic leadership such as are outlined in the New Testament pastoral epistles.¹⁶ Coming out of this, we find as standard practice in Geneva that not only were pastors to possess a call to the ministry and receive the consent and approval of the people, but they were to be elected to their office only after a searching test of their ability in theology and in homiletics, as well as an investigation to prove the blamelessness of their lives.¹⁷

Basing his views on Scriptural example and precept, Calvin maintained and promoted a high-view of the pastoral office, thereby avoiding the many abuses and damaging practices which had for too long plagued the church under its Roman bondage.¹⁸ Though much more could be said, it is at this point already clear that we owe a great deal to John Calvin and to his formulation of the pastoral office. This is especially true for those of us who minister within the Presbyterian and Reformed tradition.

The Duties of the Pastor in the Thought of John Calvin

From our discussion of the place of the pastor and of the office he fulfills, we move now to a consideration of the chief duties or responsibilities of the pastor. We can summarise Calvin's thoughts on the matter by noting the essential responsibilities of the pastor as being to "proclaim the Word of God, to teach, admonish, exhort and reprove publicly and privately, to administer the sacraments and, with the elders or their deputies, to issue fraternal warnings."¹⁹ As this summary quotation makes clear, the four ministerial tasks that Calvin sees as basic to pastoral ministry are: (1) the proclamation of the Word, (2) the visitation of the flock, (3) the proper administration of the sacraments, and (4) the practice of biblical church discipline.

The Proclamation of the Word

Beginning with preaching, which is of "the basic and fundamental character of pastoral ministry,"²⁰ it is beneficial to point out that Calvin held preaching in high esteem and as the chief duty of pastors.²¹ He taught that "the church is built up solely by outward preaching," and that preaching is a manifestation of God to His people.²² When it actually came to the dynamics of preaching, Calvin pointed out that above all else the pastor must always be biblical. The preacher is to omit nothing contained in the Word. He is to preach the whole counsel of God. Since not all have the same abilities, he is to preach in a way that all who hear him can duly comprehend. Further and most importantly, the pastor must not be content to preach doctrine only, but he must also apply the Word and call his people to faith and repentance.²³

It should also be pointed out that Calvin abhorred those who supplied to the congregation their own ideas and thoughts, thus withholding the truth,²⁴ and so he frequently stressed the centrality and even exclusivity of the inspired Word in preaching.²⁵ A final and related comment on this aspect of the pastor's responsibility has to do with Calvin's view that it was through preaching that the power of the "keys of the kingdom of God" are made effective.²⁶ It was because of this that the public ministry of the Word was seen as the primary concern of the pastor and, subsequently, that those who were neither gifted nor willing to teach, were kept from this office.²⁷

The Visitation of the Flock

Closely allied with the pastor's preaching ministry came visitation. It seems to have been quite keenly felt by Calvin, that "what a pastor does in public in his preaching he must do in private when admonishing or instructing the members of his flock individually."²⁸ Pointing out that this was the apostle Paul's own practice, Calvin believed that in his doing and speaking about this, Paul had given a pattern for the ministry of the Word; a pattern which included pastoral visitation and ought to be adhered to.²⁹ It is clear that Calvin saw the practical value of such a ministry as the visitation of the flock and that he was firmly persuaded as to its importance. In this light, the following quotation is very typical of him:

For Christ has not appointed pastors upon this condition, that they may only teach the church in general in the open pulpit; but that they may take charge of every particular sheep, that they may bring back to the sheepfold those which wander and go astray, that they may strengthen those which are discouraged and weak, that they may cure the sick, that they may lift up and set foot on the feeble ... for common doctrine will often times wax cold unless it be holpen with private admonitions.³⁰

Particular care was to be taken with regard to the visiting of the sick, with Calvin including in the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* of 1541 the principle that no one confined to bed should be left for three days before being visited.³¹ Such a programme of visitation, especially of the sick, brought with it the positive benefits of having the pastor and the church made aware of the specific and varying situations of individual members and, therefore, more able to render effective help.³² Lamenting the short-sightedness of many of his contemporaries who failed to visit the homes of their flocks, Calvin insisted that "it is not enough that a pastor in the pulpit teach all in common, if he does not add also particular instruction, according as necessity requires, or occasion offers."³³ Elsewhere, and much more bluntly, Calvin stated that "the negligence of those men is inexcusable, who, having made one sermon, as if they had done their task, live all their time idly; as if their voice were shut up within the church walls, seeing that so soon as they be departed thence they be dumb."³⁴

The Proper Administration of the Sacraments

The administration of the sacraments are also an integral part of the pastor's responsibility as a servant of God. In fact, Calvin speaks of the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments as the pastor's "chief duties" and "particular functions."³⁵ These signs and seals

THE PASTORAL THEOLOGY OF JOHN CALVIN

of the New Covenant, baptism and the Lord's Supper,³⁶ were viewed by Calvin as being ineffectual apart from the Word.³⁷ He terms the sacraments "a sort of appendix" to the gospel,³⁸ and not only states that without the accompanying Word there is no spiritual efficacy, but goes further and "calls the sacraments without the Word idle and unmeaning shadows, pure corruptions, and delusive signs."³⁹ In Calvin's mind, lest there be any mistake, the "word" was not the mystical incarnation of the Roman priest, but the promise which explains the power and use of the signs. Hence preaching was to precede and always accompany the celebration of the sacraments.⁴⁰

For Calvin, the sphere of sacramental action was the church. To her only had the sacraments been committed by the Lord, and Calvin was adamant that the use of the sacraments were vitally necessary to the health of the church and its members. He calls them "the pillars of our faith"⁴¹ and speaks of them as sustaining, nourishing, confirming and increasing our faith.⁴² With regard to the celebration of the sacraments, we note again that for Calvin the sacraments were to be celebrated in connection with and in subordination to the Word of God, and this because it is from the Word that they derive their virtue. They were also to be celebrated in a simple manner and to be related as closely as possible to the form of their institution. Moreover, they were not to be obscured by the introduction of other ceremonies into the church, and the Lord's Supper was to be celebrated frequently.⁴³ Another interesting note in Calvin's discussion of the sacraments, and particularly in regard to the Lord's Supper, is his remark that there was nothing more useful in the church and that "this is the reason why from the beginning the devil has sought to contaminate its observance by errors and superstitions."⁴⁴

The Practice of Biblical Church Discipline

A fourth role that was added to the pastor's duties was that of being a disciplinarian. This aspect of the pastoral office was one that Calvin took very seriously, seeing the carrying out of biblical church discipline as necessary to truly reforming the church according to the Word of God.⁴⁵ We can describe Calvin's understanding of church discipline as "the oversight of the members of the church to ensure that their lives and confession is consonant with the teaching and precepts of the gospel."⁴⁶ As with all the other facets of pastoral ministry, preaching is fundamental to proper discipline, as it is the gospel which convicts of sin and leads to

repentance and faith.⁴⁷ Should it be the case that some fail to desist from their sinful activity, either because they are not true believers or because they have hardened themselves against the Word of God, then in such instances it was incumbent upon the pastor to admonish such a one.

Significantly, whilst the pastor may rebuke the wayward and impose disciplinary measures upon them, he is, however, unable and forbidden to take final action on his own.⁴⁸ It is for this purpose, teaches Calvin, that the elders (also referred to as governors) were appointed.⁴⁹ And so, after a private warning had been given and then a public admonition, it fell to the pastor *and* his elders to exclude the offending party from the congregation. Under no misapprehension as to the seriousness of this act, the purpose of this third and final step in the disciplinary process was threefold. According to Calvin, it was to preserve the honour of God by ensuring that the name of Christ was not blasphemed. It was to protect the good from the wicked by excluding those who would corrupt others. And it was to bring the offending sinner to repentance and restoration.⁵⁰ If such measures fail, then the recalcitrant member is to be excommunicated—an act clearly separate from the right of the sword—but which is, nonetheless, the severest punishment of the church.⁵¹

Together with the more general duties of encouragement and edification through godly living and the equipping of the saints through the exercise of a faithful ministry,⁵² these four items are the main duties of the pastor. We may summarise what we have discovered of Calvin's pastoral theology so far by stating that according to Calvin:

Pastors, therefore, are men who have both heavy responsibilities but also certain rights. They are to speak the truth fearlessly, but also in a way which will reach their hearers. They are to be diligent students of the Scriptures, but also to apply that which the Spirit teaches them in the Word to those who hear them either in public or in private. At the same time they are to manifest their faith and their obedience to their Lord by the lives they live in the world. The flock, on the other hand, must recognise the pastor's authority by seeking to hearken and obey that which is proclaimed to them.⁵³

John Calvin as a Pastor

Having now seen something of the thought of John Calvin in relation to the pastoral office and its accompanying responsibilities, the

question which remains to be answered is whether or not Calvin attained to the high standard which he himself set? Having raised the question, it is at this point a joy to be able to answer it by examining Calvin's own pastoral endeavours and to discover that he did not fail to practise that which he espoused in his *Institutes* and other writings and which he expected of others also. In spite of his being a man of learning and his being so extensively involved in broader reformational affairs, John Calvin was himself actively engaged in pastoral work. Calvin was not an idle occupant of the ministerial study, and neither was he a devotee of committees, in which lesser men are wont to hide, but he was a pastor busied with the common round of parish duties.⁵⁴

To what degree Calvin faithfully carried out the office of pastor can, at least in part, best be seen by looking at the way in which he himself fulfilled those functions which he deemed so necessary and vital. In looking at the way he performed these duties not only do we learn that he was a truly exemplary servant of God and the people of God, but we also see something of his great concern in pastoral ministry. And although this is not the place to develop this idea, yet it seems clear to me that whilst Calvin's ultimate concern was for the glory of God, yet as a pastor his more proximate and immediately encompassing concern in the ministry was for the salvation of souls and the securing of assurance. It seems to me that this twin focus was pivotal throughout his ministry and that it would be no exaggeration to maintain that it was Calvin's very real and pressing concern for these vital themes to be realised in the lives of his parishioners, which formed the practical framework of all his pastoral labours. It was from this basic motivation that Calvin propelled himself into the rigours of the Genevan pastorate. So then, bearing in mind both this particular emphasis and what we have previously stated concerning the four essential tasks of the pastor, we turn now to see and to assess Calvin's own involvement in each of these areas.

Calvin as a Preacher of God's Word

In a way that few since have manage to emulate, it was the pulpit that functioned as the very heart of Calvin's ministry, with everything else centering around this. Any doubts as to whether this is true or not are soon dispelled when one learns of Calvin's having preached in excess of 2,300 sermons in his lifetime.⁵⁵ Surely the sheer massiveness of the preaching accomplished by Calvin is a powerful indicator of Calvin's

having held the ministry of preaching in the highest regard. Moreover, believing that God meant preaching to be a pastoral event, Calvin sought throughout his preaching career to bring lost and troubled souls into the full and liberating assurance of faith.⁵⁶ In this capacity he renounced all that would bring him personal glory and placed his genius, scholarship and rhetoric wholly in the service of the Gospel.⁵⁷ Divesting himself of all that would hinder him, and resisting all inventions of the human mind, Calvin, through his preaching, endeavoured to feed the sheep and drive away the wolves; to build up Christ's household and to cast down Satan's.⁵⁸

As is widely known, Calvin followed Zwingli and a number of the Church Fathers (eg, Theodore of Mopsuestia and the "Antiochene" school) in his approach to Scripture. Eschewing the allegorical method of earlier theologians and preachers and the *Quadrigen* of the medieval church,⁵⁹ Calvin adopted an expository method of preaching. Favouring a straightforward explanation of the passage under consideration, Calvin typically preached without notes and, it seems, directly from the original languages. He very rarely employed humour in his sermons and perhaps even less frequently spoke of or referred to himself.⁶⁰ Preaching twice on Sundays and every day of the week on alternate weeks,⁶¹ Calvin brought to his people in undiluted and unapologetic fashion, the whole counsel of God. This is not to say that he preached above people's heads or haphazardly and without regard to his congregations understanding and situation (in fact, Calvin *never* just "unloaded" his week's study on his people) but, on the contrary, Calvin went to great lengths to both explain and apply the Scriptures to the lives of his hearers as they found themselves in the 16th century.

Believing whole heartedly that the Word of God is the foundation of the church,⁶² Calvin exemplified what he encouraged in others around him by so dedicating himself to the task of preaching that he exercised an extraordinary influence over the whole course of the Reformation.

Calvin as a Faithful Visitor of His Flock

In turning now to look at Calvin and his ministry of visitation, it is important that we realise that we really have not moved away from the subject of preaching. For Calvin, visitation was an extension of his preaching; it was a necessary means of supplementing the sermon and of bringing home the promises of God to individual souls.⁶³ An integral

element of pastoral ministry, Calvin readily gave himself to visiting those entrusted to him. In Calvin's mind, the discharging of this duty was not a burden, but a practice which very effectively lent itself to the kinds of upbuilding and care which a pastor was required to supply his people.

Interestingly, the visitation of homes was a much neglected practice throughout this era, and in Geneva it appears to have been non-existent until Calvin came onto the scene and undertook the work himself. Such was his commitment to pastoral visitation, that when the plague came to Geneva in 1542 and the Council forbade him to visit its victims, Calvin took no notice and stood ready to set himself apart for this work.⁶⁴ Though a most important figure in the eyes of the Genevan Council, yet Calvin simply saw himself as one appointed to serve the individuals of his parish by bringing to them a knowledge of salvation and peace of mind regardless of the condition they might be in. Here is just one more example of how closely his practice followed his principles, for elsewhere he has stated:

Whatever others may think we do not regard our office as bound within such narrow limits that when the sermon is delivered we may rest as if our task were done. They whose blood will be required of us if lost through our slothfulness, are to be cared for much more closely and vigilantly.⁶⁵

Calvin as a Celebrant of the Sacraments

As we have already noted, along with the preaching of the Word it was the administration of the sacraments which formed a Reformed pastor's chief duties. In defining the sacraments as "a testimony of divine grace toward us, confirmed by an outward sign, with mutual attestation of our piety toward Him,"⁶⁶ Calvin went on to speak of these "signs" as: a token and proof of our cleansing, of our mortification and renewal in Christ, and of our union with Christ (Baptism); and as sealing and confirming to us the reality of our being partakers in Christ (the Lord's Supper).⁶⁷ Following the New Testament, Calvin taught baptism to be the sacrament of initiation, bringing us into the church and entering us amongst the believing community, whilst the Lord's Supper was the sacrament of continuation, its frequent distribution enabling us to continually feed upon Christ and be spiritually nourished by Him.⁶⁸

Although a point of theological controversy throughout the period of the Reformation,⁶⁹ Calvin never forgot that the sacraments were for the believer. Knowing the weaknesses of faith and the struggles with which it

engages daily, Calvin did not consider the men and women of his congregation to be any stronger than they really were. As the shepherd of their souls, he knew that his people needed help and so he speaks of the sacraments as aids to faith and compares them to pillars designed to support the structure of our faith. This high view of the sacraments and of their place in the Christian life does not in any way deny the foundational role that the Word of God must play. Rather, with great insight into our nature and condition, Calvin insists that when the sacraments are wedded to the Word and made part of the life of faith they serve it as pillars and supports upon which it can lean more strongly.⁷⁰

An astute pastor, Calvin was very much aware of the fears and hesitations which oftentimes gripped the hearts of many parishioners in regard to their participation in the sacraments. Whether it be parents distressed over the eternal lot of their child who may have died before being baptised, or the individual who had withdrawn from the celebration of the Lord's Supper on account of their feelings of unworthiness, Calvin, with great solicitude, sought them out and helpfully set about appeasing their fears.⁷¹ Once again, in these kinds of instances one vividly perceives this *idée fixe* on the part of Calvin to remove doubt and to bring gospel peace to troubled minds.

Other practices of Calvin connected with his administration of the sacraments can best be seen as further outgrowths of his obsession for alleviating the anxiousness of souls under his care. Among them we can include his practice of holding private conversations with those who were to partake of holy communion.⁷² This he held out to provide both necessary instruction to the ignorant and poorly informed, and as a means of consolation to those who were burdened under some weight of torment. In this connection we should also note Calvin's desire to be able to administer the sacraments to the ill. For in light of the struggles which the ill were forced to undergo, Calvin protested against the notion that those who were about to leave this world should be deprived of the comfort of the Lord's Supper. Unfortunately, the superstition attached to the withholding of the elements which raged at the time prevented this from occurring in either Geneva or France.⁷³

Further, when necessary, Calvin heard confession.⁷⁴ Unlike many others, Calvin who well understood the needs of the human heart did not condemn confession in itself. Rather, knowing the comfort that confession can bring in moments of disturbance and confusion, he freely

made himself available to assist the burdened individual who was unable to find relief in his or her own private approaches to God.⁷⁵ We see in each of these practices, which Calvin engaged in and made available to his people not only a model of true pastoral concern, but also of true pastoral wisdom.

Calvin as a Just and Redemptive Disciplinarian

Finally, then, in our treatment of Calvin as pastor we turn and focus upon the aspect of church discipline. A staunch advocate of such discipline amid the redeemed community, Calvin never failed to take the requisite action to preserve the unity and purity of the Church of Jesus Christ. Throughout his pastoral labours, Calvin saw church discipline as serving to bridle, curb and restrain those who would rise up against the doctrine of Christ. It was also a spur to stimulate the inactive and sometimes a father's rod, with which those who have grievously fallen may be chastised in mercy with the gentleness of the Spirit of Christ.⁷⁶ As we have come to expect, Calvin maintained that preaching is fundamental to the proper process of discipline, and this because it is only by the power of the Gospel that sinners are convicted of their sins and enabled to turn in repentance and faith to Christ, the head of the church.

Although many a historian has fostered and promoted a conception of Calvin as something of a rabid disciplinarian—one who ruled all Geneva with the proverbial iron fist—this is actually quite removed from the truth and something of a whitewashing of the historical facts.⁷⁷ Properly considered, Calvin's emphasis upon and practice of church discipline was harmonious with his twin concerns noted earlier and seen throughout his pastoral activities. From reading his various writings on this topic and from studying what we can of his own practice, we actually discover that biblical church discipline, if administered justly and with the intent of restoring the lapsed or fallen member, naturally promoted and made possible the continuance and full enjoyment of one's salvation and assurance in Christ. Wanting those who had a genuine heart for God to have every opportunity to commune with their Saviour and to bask confidently in the warm light of His favour and grace, Calvin did not back away from the exercise of "upright discipline."⁷⁸ In Calvin's eyes, discipline was a pastoral measure which facilitated and ensured the closest possible connection between the Gospel and the day to day life of man. Against this backdrop, then, how terribly sad it is that throughout

the centuries this very positive and God-honouring perspective has been lost. Little wonder that we see in our own day those sections of Christendom which have severed the arm of discipline from the body of pastoral responsibility to be so weak and ailing.⁷⁹

Conclusion: More Than a Systematician, a Faithful Pastor Also

Calvin was, of course, involved in many other associated activities. He was after all a pastor busied with the common round of duties. Though we cannot now discuss at length what other duties he took up, yet we do know that between 1550 and 1559 he took 270 weddings and 50 baptisms. He catechised the children of his church at midday every Sunday, lectured in theology three times per week, frequently offered hospitality to parishioners and visitors, was involved in weekly minister's meetings, and kept up a rigorous schedule of correspondence with kings, queens, nobleman, ecclesiastic heads and numerous friends. In all of these things, as with the four central duties we have just discussed, we find that Calvin performed all of these things with the underlying concern of seeing souls saved and consciences put at peace with God. A gifted man, a godly man, and a man consistent with his own principles, perhaps there is no more fitting way to conclude this brief precis of the pastoral theology of John Calvin than with the words of Nicholas des Gallars, a member of Calvin's own pastoral team and who summed up his ministry in these words:

What labors, what long waking hours, what worries he bore; ... with what faithfulness and intelligence he took an interest in everyone; with what kindness and good he received those who turned to him; with what rapidity and openness he answered those who questioned him on the most serious questions; with what wisdom he received, both privately and publicly, the difficulties and problems brought to him; with what gentleness he comforted the afflicted, raised those who were laid low and discouraged; with what firmness he resisted the enemy; with what zeal he brought low the proud and stubborn; with what greatness of soul he endured misfortune; with what moderation he behaved in prosperity; with what skill and enthusiasm, finally, he acquitted himself of all the duties of a true and faithful servant of God.⁸⁰

As the voices of Calvin's detractors, both past and present, are still often heard to cry out, and as many of our parishioners, friends and acquaintances balk at the name of Calvin or our own Calvinism, let us

present to them this John Calvin, the faithful pastor of souls. And let each of us go further still, let those of us who identify with the theology of Calvin make every effort to identify with him in practice too. As pastors called of God to once again bring the Gospel of God's free grace into the foreground of church life and Christian experience, may we like Calvin be concerned for the salvation of souls and for "poor consciences" in our congregations and everywhere. May we do so for the glory of God.

Endnotes

¹ Warfield, *Calvin And Augustine* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Co, 1971), 26.

² Benoit, "Pastoral Care of the Prophet," in *John Calvin, Contemporary Prophet*, ed J T Hoogstra. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1959), 51.

³ Gonzalez, *The Story Of Christianity, Vol 2* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1985), 61.

⁴ Hagstotz, "John Calvin, Reformer From Geneva," *Heroes Of The Reformation* (Mountain View: Pacific Publishing Association, 1951), 262.

⁵ Cf, John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Pennsylvania: Westminster Press, 1960), note the introduction, and then in the Institutes: 1,2,1-2; and 3,7,1ff.

⁶ Benoit, "Pastoral Care of the Prophet," 51.

⁷ Cf, Reid, "John Calvin, Pastoral Theologian," *Reformed Theological Review* (Sep-Dec 1982), 65.

⁸ Calvin, *Institutes*, 4,3,1-3; also note the remark in 4,3,4: "Next come pastors and teachers, whom the church can never go without." Also note *Calvin's Commentaries* (Michigan: Baker Book House, 1989) on Tit 3:5.

⁹ Calvin, *Institutes*, 4,3,1.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 4,3,1; cf, 4,1,5.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 4,3,1.

¹² Potter and Greengrass, *John Calvin* (London: Edward Arnold, 1983), 69-76 discuss each of these in a helpful way. Perhaps the best discussion of them is that contained in the "Ecclesiastical Ordinances of 1541."

¹³ Eg, Calvin, *Institutes*, 4,3-4.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 4,3,2.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 4,3,3.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 4,3,6; 4,4,12; and *Calvin's Commentaries* on 1 Tim 3:1-7 and on Tit 1:7-8.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 4,3,10-11; 4,3,13-15.

¹⁸ Cf, *Ibid*, 4,5,1-19, where Calvin outlines some of these abuses and how the papacy overthrew the older and more biblical practices as related to the government and practice of the church.

¹⁹ Potter and Greengrass, *John Calvin*, 71.

²⁰ Reid, "John Calvin, Pastoral Theologian," 81

²¹ Calvin, *Institutes*, 4,1,5; and 4,4,3.

²² *Ibid*, 4,1,5.

²³ *Ibid*, 4,8,8-9; and see *Calvin's Commentaries* on Acts 20:20; Eph 4:13; Tit 1:9; Job 33; and Jer 1:9, for other remarks on preaching.

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²⁴ Parker, *Portrait Of Calvin* (London: SCM Press, 1983), 83f; and *Calvin's Commentaries* on 2 Tim.3:16.

²⁵ Calvin, *Institutes*, 4,8,8-9.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 4,1,22; 4,11,1; and *Calvin's Commentaries* on Matt 16:19.

²⁷ Reid, "John Calvin, Pastoral Theologian," 67.

²⁸ *Ibid*, 68.

²⁹ Calvin, *Institutes*, 4,3,6.

³⁰ *Calvin's Commentaries* on Acts 20:20.

³¹ Wallace, *Calvin, Geneva and the Reformation: A Study of Calvin As Social Worker, Churchman, Pastor and Theologian* (Grand Rapids/Edinburgh: Baker Book House/Scottish Academic Press, 1990), 175.

³² *Ibid*.

³³ *Calvin's Commentaries* on 1 Thess 2:11.

³⁴ *Calvin's Commentaries* on Acts 2:20.

³⁵ Calvin, *Institutes*, 4,3,6; and 4,4,3 (noting the sub-heading).

³⁶ *Ibid*, 4,19-20, show Calvin's firm conviction that these are the only two sacraments. Later in 4,19,1ff he goes on to dismiss the five additional Catholic sacraments.

³⁷ *Ibid*, 4,14,6; 4,14,3-4; and 4,14,11.

³⁸ *Ibid*, 4,14,3.

³⁹ Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Word And Sacrament* (Tyler: Geneva Divinity School Press, 1962), 135f. I am following Wallace throughout this section on the sacraments, especially his comments on pages 133-7, and 234-40. I find him very helpful on this topic.

⁴⁰ Calvin, *Institutes*, 4,14,4.; and 4,17,39

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 4,14,6.

⁴² *Ibid*, 4,14,7.

⁴³ Once again I am following Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament*, 242. But do see Calvin, *Institutes*, 4,17,43-44,46

⁴⁴ Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine Of The Word And Sacrament*, 240; cf, Calvin, *Institutes*, 4,17,1; and 4,18,1.

⁴⁵ Calvin, *Institutes*, 4,11,5.

⁴⁶ Reid, "John Calvin, Pastoral Theologian," 69.

⁴⁷ Reid, "John Calvin, Pastoral Theologian," 68-69.

⁴⁸ Calvin, *Institutes*, 4,11,6; and cf. 4,3,15; 4,4,10; and 4,20,8, where it is also clear that Calvin's prefers a number of persons to be involved in the government of the church as opposed to just one.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 4,3,8.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 4,12,5.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, 4,11,5.

⁵² *Ibid*, 4,1,5; Cf. *Calvin's Commentaries* on Eph 4:12f.

⁵³ Reid, "John Calvin, Pastoral Theologian," 71.

⁵⁴ Parker, *Portrait Of Calvin*, 80.

⁵⁵ Kelly, "Some Aspects of the Preaching of John Calvin," *Evangel 5* (1987), 11.

⁵⁶ Wallace, *Calvin, Geneva and the Reformation*, 171.

⁵⁷ Stickelberger, *Calvin* (London: James Clark & Company, Ltd, 1959), 95.

⁵⁸ Calvin, *Institutes*, 4,8,9.

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⁵⁹ Cf, *ibid*, 3,4,4-6.

⁶⁰ Kelly, in *Evangel*: p.11.

⁶¹ Parker, "Some Aspects of the Preaching of John Calvin," 82.

⁶² Calvin, *Institutes*, 4,2,4.

⁶³ *Ibid*, 3,4,14; Cf. *Calvin's Commentaries* on 1 Thess 2:11.

⁶⁴ Parker, *Portrait Of Calvin*, 81.

⁶⁵ *Calvin's Commentaries* on Acts 2:20.

⁶⁶ Calvin, *Institutes*, 4,14,1. Calvin actually provides three definitions in this section. this one which is his own. A longer one also of his own. And also one from Augustine.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 4,14,3-6; and 4,17,4-5.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 4,18,19.

⁶⁹ Cf, *ibid*, 4,17,11-15 (contra the Schoolmen and the doctrine of transubstantiation); 4,17,16-31 (contra the doctrine of the ubiquity of Christ's body); 4,17,35-37 (contra the physical adoration of the elements); 4,17,47-50 (contra the Roman Catholic practice of withholding the cup from the congregation); 4,18,1-18 (contra the mass); 4,19,1-37 (contra the additional five "sacraments" of the Roman Catholic Church).

⁷⁰ Benoit, "Pastoral Care of the Prophet," 61; cf, footnotes 35-44.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, 62.

⁷² Calvin, *Institutes*, 3,4,12; and, Wallace, *Calvin, Geneva And The Reformation*, 174.

⁷³ Cf, Benoit, "Pastoral Care of the Prophet," 63.

⁷⁴ Calvin, *Institutes*, 3,4,6; 3,4,10-11; and 3,4,12-14.

⁷⁵ Benoit, "Pastoral Care of the Prophet," 63-64. This section in Benoit also points out the differences between Calvin's practice in hearing confession, etc, and the Roman Catholic practice which Calvin actually condemns.

⁷⁶ Calvin, *Institutes*, 4,12,1; and see Parker, *Portrait Of Calvin*, 90.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 4,12,9; and 4,12,11. Here alone we see that Calvin recognised and placed limits on ecclesial discipline and that he himself stood against excessive discipline.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 4,3,6.

⁷⁹ Cf, *ibid*, 4,12,1. Here Calvin remarks that failure to practice church discipline is to contribute to the dissolution of the church.

⁸⁰ Gill, *The Reformation As a Revival Movement: A History of the European Reformation*. (Box Hill North: Presbyterian Theological College, 1994), 34.

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OUR BIBLE-PRESBYTERIAN FAITH AND PRACTICE

James Chan

It has become necessary for me to preach on the distinctives of our Bible-Presbyterian (B-P) faith and practice. I must admit that I do not relish the circumstances under which I address this issue, but I must because, of late, some young people in our church have questioned our doctrines and practices at Calvary B-P Church (Jurong). They have charged that our teachings are not in accordance to the Bible, and our practices are an abomination to God.

One of them quoted from the B-P Church Constitution Article 4.1, “The doctrine of the church shall be in accordance with that system commonly called ‘The Reformed Faith’ as expressed in the Confession of Faith as set forth by the historic Westminster Assembly together with the Larger and Shorter Catechisms.” He accused the B-P church of taking “a stand that is far from the Reformed Faith.” And he charged the church leaders with misinforming others, and demanded that this particular clause be removed from the B-P Church Constitution.

Dearly beloved, we do not misinform others about our B-P faith and practice. We know that the Westminster Confession of Faith does not cover biblical separation (Article 4.2, 4.12). We also know that not all Bible scholars have the same interpretation of it. For this reason, we state clearly the chief tenets of the doctrine of the Church in the constitution (Article 4.2). The Board of Elders takes a serious view of these allegations, and the matter has to be settled immediately. As such we have to screen all our leaders and Bible teachers from both the English and Mandarin congregations. If there are people who disagree and are unhappy with our B-P faith and practice, we lovingly encourage them to go to a church that shares their convictions. And we wish them well. They should not stay in the church and try to influence others with their views.

This is in agreement with the vow they have made when they became our members.

We are Bible-Presbyterians

Beloved, we are Bible-Presbyterians. We are not Orthodox Presbyterians or Reformed Presbyterians or Free Presbyterians. They may differ in their practice from us, but we do not have the right nor do we want to charge that just because they are different, what they do is therefore unbiblical.

As Bible-Presbyterians, our emphasis is on the Bible, the Word of God. The Word of God is our only rule of faith and practice. Our adoption of the Westminster Confession of Faith is to show that we hold to the Calvinistic doctrine. We made clear that our view on the doctrine of eschatology is premillennial (Article 4.2-7). We sincerely believe that our teaching and practice are closest to the Bible. We believe that our faith and practice is in accordance to the Word of God. Therefore, we do not intend to change our Church Constitution; neither do we need to reform our faith and practice.

Two of the young people who have terminated their church membership gave 12 reasons for their leaving. We are not sad over their departure because throughout history, good men have chosen to differ. But we are concerned over their persistent charges that we have erred in the faith and that our practice is unbiblical. As the church pastor, I have to show members and friends of Calvary B-P (Jurong) the reasons for our faith and practice.

(1) Are Musicals Wrong?

They believe that “Whatever is not commanded in the Holy Scripture, is forbidden ... such as presentation, drama, sketches, musical etc, which Christ and the Apostles neither did practise themselves nor give approval of such activities, as being part of the worship of God or the declaration of His glory.”

We believe that whatever is not mentioned in the Scripture is not necessarily forbidden. There are many things that we do which are not mentioned in the Bible, such as Youth Fellowship, Adult Fellowship, Sunday School, Awana Club, etc. Are these forbidden? No! We worship in the church building while some worship in hotels. Are such activities forbidden just because Christ and the Apostles did not mention them? No!

Presentations, dramas, sketches and musicals can be effective means of communicating the Gospel if they are done in a proper manner and on the right occasion. In Ezekiel 4 and 5, God used “drama” as one of His teaching methods to convey His message to His people through His prophet.

In our church, the main instruction in the worship service always comes from the preaching of the Word of God. On certain occasions, such as Bible camp testimony time, or Christmas praise service, we have musical or sketches, but the main instruction is still from the preaching of the Word of God. Is that wrong? No!

(2) Is It Wrong to Sing Hymns?

They also believe “that it is not acceptable unto God, in the singing of uninspired hymns and songs as being part of the worship of Him. This applies to the public and private worship of God, and in any Christian gathering. ... The singing of uninspired hymns and songs is a violation of the Second Commandment. ... The only acceptable means of worshipping and glorifying Him in singing according to the Holy Scripture, is only to be taken from the inspired book of Psalms found in the written Word of God.”

We believe that singing in the worship service or at any Christian gathering is not limited to the book of Psalms. Paul in Ephesians 5:19 says, “Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.” Psalms refer primarily to the OT psalms put to music. It is “a song designed to be sung with the accompaniment of instrumental music ... one of the sacred poems contained in the book of Psalms (Acts 13:33 quoted Ps 2:7) ... any sacred poem formed on the model of the OT Psalms, as in 1 Cor 14:26.” (Charles Hodge, *The Epistle to the Ephesians*, Banner of Truth, 304). Hymns refer primarily to songs of praise to God. They are probably distinguished from the psalms that praise God, in that they specifically praise the Lord Jesus Christ (eg, Col 1:12-16; 1 Tim 2:5; Rev 5:9-10). Spiritual songs are songs of testimony, which “signify spontaneous outpourings of praise under the leading of the Holy Spirit” (Leon Morris, *Expository Reflections on the Letter to the Ephesians*, Baker, 177). In our hymnal, *Revival Hymns and Choruses*, we may classify “The Lord is our Shepherd” (Hymn 344) as a psalm; “The Old Rugged Cross” (Hymn 199) as a hymn; and “Jesus is the Joy of Living” (Hymn 125) as a spiritual song.

Paul's intention is to encourage Christians to use a great variety of sacred songs to exalt the Lord. We ought not to limit our songs to just the OT Psalms. There are Christians who only want to sing the psalms, and there are others who choose not to sing; we have no quarrel with them. But as Bible-Presbyterians, we choose to sing "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs."

(3) Are Musical Instruments Wrong?

They believe that "the existence of a choir or the use of musical instruments, as part of worship to God in the NT Church, is not according to Holy Scripture." Their reason is that such practices are not recorded as being part of the worship in the NT church.

As Bible-Presbyterians, we believe that there is nothing wrong to use musical instruments or to have the choir sing in the worship service for two reasons: It was done in the OT time, and we are encouraged by the Apostle Paul to use music in our worship (Eph 5:19). Some of the Psalms were to be sung with stringed instruments (*Neginoth*) as in Psalms 4, 6, 67. Others were instructed by the authors to be sung with wind instruments (*Nehiloth*; flute accompaniment) as in Psalm 5. Still others were to be sung with the choir as in Psalms 42, 44, 45 (sons of Korah who were singers in the Temple Choir).

They charge that the choir and musical instruments in the church are pure entertainment that draws worshippers' attention away from God. I can only say that there are many things that draw man's attention from worshipping God, and these mainly have to do with the problems of the heart. If the heart is not right, even the songs of angels would not draw man to worship God. Therefore, we do not see anything wrong in having the piano and organ and choir in the worship service if they are used in a proper manner.

(4) How Do We Keep the Sabbath?

They believe that "the teaching and practice of the church (with reference to Calvary Jurong) on the Christian Sabbath is not according to the teaching of the Holy Scripture. The Holy Scripture required the keeping of the whole of the Lord's Day for public and private worship of God (Exod 20:8-11), except for works of mercy and necessity (Matt 12:1-13)." They charge that some leaders "failed to teach the proper way of keeping the Lord's Day." They further charge that some church leaders

violated the Fourth Commandment when they request prayers for themselves and others making business trips on the Lord's Day.

We agree that the Holy Scripture requires the keeping of the whole Lord's Day for the Lord and His service. However, we disagree with their application of keeping the Lord's Day. For example, a man is flying back from the United States; he leaves on Saturday. Halfway across the Pacific Ocean, it is the Lord's Day. Should he, then, get off? Or take this situation, a person is required to meet his business client on Monday morning. He is unable to travel on Saturday because of work commitment. The only day to travel is on Sunday in order to meet his client on Monday. Can he travel? Our friends say "No!" We beg to differ because it is a work of necessity.

(5) Must the Bread of the Lord's Supper be Physically Broken?

They "are of the view that the proper manner of observing the Lord's Supper, includes the physical and actual breaking of the bread before the congregation, before giving it to the communicants, which at times, our minister failed to do."

We believe that, in the breaking of the bread, the Bible does not command the pastor to follow every single step that the Lord had taken. If it is a command then I have to take a loaf of bread, break each piece for each of the communicants. That is because the word "gave" (Matt 26:26) in Greek is in the imperfect tense; it implies that the Lord Jesus went about distributing the bread by breaking it piece by piece for each one of His disciples. More importantly, I think the question that needs to be asked is this: Is our present method of administering the Lord's Supper in any way less meaningful or unbiblical? Again, I stress that there are other churches that do things differently from us. If they want to break the bread, let them break the bread. If they want to drink from one chalice, let them do so. We have no quarrel with them. But just because we choose to do some things differently does not make us less biblical. We do not have to apologise for the way we do things in Calvary Jurong.

(6) Is Using the Title of "Reverend" Wrong?

They believe that "the use of the title 'Reverend' addressed to any ordained minister is not according to Holy Scripture. The title 'Reverend' in the Holy Scripture, is only attributed to God's name (Ps 111:9) and

none else. Thus, it is not to be given to any man, regardless of his office or status, because this honour is only attributed and due to God alone.”

The title “Reverend” is used to refer to the character of the office rather than to the individual. It dignifies the work rather than the worker. Paul, in calling himself an apostle, says “I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office” (Rom 11:13).

On the title of “Reverend,” Dr John R Rice has this to say, “The word simply means in English, that the man is a minister. It means nothing more than that. Not a person who is using the title for a minister, means to worship him as God. In English usage, the title has simply become synonymous with ‘minister’ or ‘preacher’ or ‘pastor.’ So it is perfectly proper to use the term. ... it is hurtful to cause division and strife over the meaning of words to which the Bible does not attach special and important meanings. And it is foolish to accuse a preacher of blasphemy because he is addressed as ‘Reverend,’ as it would be to accuse a physician of sinful pride in allowing himself to be called ‘Doctor.’ ‘Doctor,’ in common language, means ‘physician.’ ‘Reverend,’ in common language, means ‘minister.’” (John R Rice, *Here is My Question*, Sword of the Lord Publishers, 146-147).

(7) Is Our Method of Electing Elders Wrong?

They are of the view that the “church’s method of the election of elders, found in Article 15 of the church constitution, section 1 ... is not in accordance to the Holy Scripture.” They say it is not a “promotional exercise.”

We agree that the election of an elder is not a promotional exercise. We do not see it as such. The calling of the elder is to servanthood and not superiority. Our church motto, Mark 10:45, calls us to minister in the pattern of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is a presumptuous mistake on the part of the dissenters to think that people seek the office of eldership for the sake of a promotion.

We believe that the Bible does not give us a full and definite pattern for church government. As a result, churches today have many different forms of government. Each church tries to form the government of the church according to their understanding of the Bible. Our form of government is based on the “Form of Government” and the Book of

Discipline of the Bible Presbyterian Church with some modification to meet our local needs (Article 11).

I belabour the point again; there are churches that do things differently from us. Just because they differ from us do not make them more righteous than us.

(8) Is It Wrong for Deacons to Preach?

They “are of the view that the office of a deacon belongs to that of serving tables and not to the ministry of the Word ... (Acts 6:1–6). ... allowing a deacon to preach the Word, ... is contrary to the teachings and instructions of the Holy Scripture.”

But they have forgotten that Stephen was a deacon (Acts 6:5) and he preached the Word of God. His sermon is recorded in Acts 7. Philip was also a deacon (Acts 6:5), and he went to preach in Samaria (Acts 8:4–10). Apollos was not even a deacon, and yet he preached.

(9) Is Celebrating Christmas Wrong?

They believe that the celebration of Christmas, Easter and other religious festivals “have no warrant, authority or approval from the Holy Scripture” and they are “not only displeasing to God but also an abomination unto Him (Deut 12:31).”

We believe that there is nothing wrong in celebrating Christmas and Easter, if it is done to remember the great work of salvation accomplished by our Lord Jesus Christ, and to preach the Gospel. We also believe that it is God’s desire for us to remember His work for His people. This is reflected in both Old and New Testaments.

In the OT, the Israelites were commanded to celebrate certain religious feasts, so as to remember His mighty acts. For example, the Passover or the Feast of Unleavened Bread was celebrated on the 14th of Nisan (April) to commemorate the deliverance of the Jews from Egypt and the establishment of Israel as a nation by God’s redemptive act. In the NT, the Lord Jesus commanded His disciples to remember Him when they partake of the Lord’s Supper. He said, “This do in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19).

If we know how to celebrate the birthday of our loved ones, is it wrong to celebrate the birth of Christ in a meaningful way and also to preach the Gospel? The angels, the shepherds and the wise men had done

it. Why can't we? After all, it is the Lord's command for us to remember Him. We ought not only to remember His death but also His birth and resurrection. These events emphasise the complete ministry of Christ for our salvation.

(10) Is It Wrong for a Woman to Speak Publicly or Lead in Prayer?

They "are of the view that the practice of the church, in allowing women to speak publicly in preaching, teaching and leading in prayer is not according to Holy Scripture (1 Cor 14:34–35; 1 Tim 2:11–14). This also applies to the teaching of children or the younger ones."

We believe that in principle the man is to lead in all those areas. However, this is not absolute. There are occasions when the men are incapable, or reluctant to serve in those ministries, and the ladies are needed to fill the gap. In the OT, we have Deborah (Judg 4-5). In NT, we have Priscilla, the wife of Aquila (Acts 18:24-26). For more details see Rev Timothy Tow's book, *The Story of My Bible-Presbyterian Faith*, 106-108.

In the mission field, there are many women missionaries, doing the work which men are unwilling to do. Kelapa Sawit B-P Church was taken care of by Miss Ng Siang Chew. Awana Club and Junior Worship—from the nursery to the young teens—are run by many faithful female teachers because few brothers responded to the need. Let me again quote from Rev Tow in his letter to the Calvary Missions Fellowship (dated April 22, 1994); he wrote, "I take my hat off to women missionaries and preachers. There is no law forbidding them to preach when men are reluctant to venture out. Let the first male to criticise the women speakers be sent to the frontiers to take their place. Amen?"

(11) Is Our Marriage Ceremony Wrong?

They "are of the view that the 'ceremony' of the solemnisation of marriage as practised by the church is glorifying to men, robbing the glory away from God and injurious to the blessed name of the Blessed Trinity." They are particularly opposed to "the marching in of the bride with musical accompaniment and the invoking of the name of the Blessed Trinity in the process of the solemnisation."

We believe that in weddings the main focus is on the bride and groom when they solemnly vow before God, and in the presence of man

to be joined together as husband and wife for life. Nevertheless, the glory must go to God who is the Source and Author of all life and the Builder and Maker of homes. The use of the processional and recessional with musical accompaniment does not rob God of His glory. Neither is it wrong to invoke the name of the Holy Trinity to bless the couple. The benediction is given as a sign of God's approval.

Again, this is a matter of liturgical difference. Certain churches may do things differently. Let none condemn another just because things are done differently.

(12) Is Our Third Point of Calvinism Wrong?

They “do not agree with the third point of Calvinism as expounded by some of the leaders of the Bible-Presbyterian churches, which was often quoted as follows: Christ's death is sufficient for the world and efficient for the elect.”

We believe that Christ's death is sufficient for all, efficient for the elect because it is taught in the Bible: Sufficient for all—Matt 11:28; John 3:16; 1 Tim 2:3–4; 2 Pet 3:9; 1 John 2:2; efficient for the elect—John 10:12, 26–27 (For details, please read Rev Tow's, *The Story of My Bible-Presbyterian Faith*, 93-100).

Conclusion

I am sorry to say that the young people who left us have chosen to hold to an extreme view of certain teachings in the Bible, and in their practice of the Christian faith. I believe they have arrived at their positions because they have elevated books written by men, and put them on par with the divinely inspired Word of God. Furthermore, in some cases, they have even reached conclusions in areas where the Bible is silent.

The Bible is the final authority of our Bible-Presbyterian faith and practice. We can see no more than what God has revealed to us in His Holy Scriptures. And we can go only as far as the Word of God takes us. To take one step farther would be pure conjecture based on man's finite intelligence (whoever that man may be—be it John Calvin or Charles Spurgeon, or the Westminster divines). And we must understand that no human explanation that contradicts the Word of God is valid. We must always go back to the Bible. That is why we are Bible-Presbyterians.

Let me also sound a word of caution to all, especially parents, because of what I deem as unethical practices by some of the young people who left the church. Through persistent e-mails, they seem intent on influencing and confusing others who chose not to share their convictions and follow them. Therefore, I urge those in our midst who have such articles to throw them away.

Finally, I want to assure all our members that what we teach and practice in Calvary are in accordance with the Word of God. Let us work together to protect the church and to advance the Gospel until the Lord returns. Amen.

Rev James Chan is pastor of Calvary Bible-Presbyterian Church (Jurong). The above was a message preached to his congregation on May 2, 1999.

Class Notes

Daniel Arianto (BTh '86) is the assistant pastor of Gereja Pemberita Injil—a church founded by Rev Jason Linn of *Pioneering in Dyak Borneo* fame. His e-mail: gepembri@uninet.net.id.

Rev **Robert Thawm Luai** ('86) principal of Far Eastern Fundamental School of Theology (6D Nanthani Street, Sawbwagyigone, Insein, Yangon, Myanmar) has started a Master of Ministry (MMin) programme in his school. In consultation with FEBC, FEFST offers a MMin in order to provide full-time Christian ministers and workers with the opportunity to deepen their knowledge of Bible/Theology/Ministry for effective local church leadership. All applicants must already possess a first degree in Bible and theology (ie, BTh, BRE, BMin, or equivalent), from an approved institution, and must be engaged in full-time Christian service. English proficiency is required for admittance into the programme. Students must complete a total of 34 credit hours of study in prescribed residential and independent study courses. The programme requires a minimum of two years to complete. Each academic year consists of 3 residential sessions of 2 weeks each, and 2 interim sessions. The curriculum consists of 12 residential courses (24 credits), 8 independent study courses (8 credits), and a thesis project (2 credits). Each residential course will last for 6 days with 5 days of lectures (6 hours per day) and a final exam on the 6th and final day (2 hours). The residential

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THE UNCHANGING ROLE OF THE LADY MISSIONARY IN A CHANGING WORLD

Lehia Paauwe

Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ said to His disciples, “The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest” (Matt 9:37-38). Truly we need more labourers, and in particular, lady missionaries today!

What is a lady missionary? The lady missionary is a consecrated Christian lady who is called of God and sent to His field of service, at home or in a foreign land. She is a servant of the Lord with a mission, having received this call from on high. This high calling from God comes to those who walk close to the Lord, seek to know His will and do it.

In Isaiah 6:1-9, Isaiah the prophet tells of his seeing the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his realisation of his own sins and unworthiness. When his iniquity was taken away and his sins purged, he also heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” Isaiah was willing to go. He obeyed and he responded saying, “Here am I, send me.” The vision of Isaiah should be the vision of every missionary. The prayer of Isaiah should be the humble prayer of every missionary.

In Acts 2:17-18 we have recorded for us the words of the prophet Joel: “And it shall come to pass in the last days saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy.” Praise God that He is raising up lady missionaries to advance His work today!

What a great privilege it is to carry out the Great Commission of our Lord Jesus Christ! What a great responsibility too! The first responsibility of the lady missionary is to win souls to Christ. It is an unchanging role.

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To evangelise or win souls to the saving knowledge of our Lord and Saviour is the main task of every missionary. This ministry must certainly be accompanied by prayer and in the power of the Holy Spirit. It is a good reminder that every Christian is saved to serve, to be a good witness of our Lord Jesus Christ. May each lady missionary have a burden for lost souls and delight to share the Good News of salvation with those who are still unsaved. As the hymnwriter Fanny Crosby puts it,

*Rescue the perishing, care for the dying,
Snatch them in pity from sin and the grave;
Weep o'er the erring one, lift up the fallen,
Tell them of Jesus, the mighty to save. ...*

*Plead with them earnestly, plead with them gently,
He will forgive if they only believe.
Rescue the perishing, care for the dying;
Jesus is merciful, Jesus will save.*

The Word of God gives us further insights into the unchanging role of the lady missionary. The Apostle Paul specifically mentioned “those women which laboured with me in the gospel” (Phil 4:3). During the early church God raised up lady missionaries to co-labour with the men missionaries. Throughout church history He has provided lady missionaries for the needy harvest fields.

One lady missionary who served under the Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions was Dr Sarah L Hosmon (1883-1964). She said goodbye to her loved ones in America and sailed to Sharjah, along the desert sands of Arabia. There she helped the Arab women and children, the sick and the suffering. She sowed the seed of God’s Word and shared the message of salvation with her patients. People wondered why Dr Hosmon would work in such a desolate area in the latter years of her life. Why did she go to a place where she was dependent on camel and donkey for transportation, especially when she could depend on only one leg of her own? The answer is of course in the testimony of another great missionary—the Apostle Paul—“For the love of Christ constraineth us” (2 Cor 5:14). Indeed, Dr Hosmon had the love of Christ. May this first love, the pure Calvary love move and motivate the heart of each lady missionary in willing and faithful service for the Lord.

Two lady missionaries, Miss Marian McNeil, a nurse, and Miss Dorothy Roberts, a teacher, went to Kenya, East Africa, to do pioneering

missionary work in the middle of this century. Besides going on safaris to spread the Gospel of Christ in the bush and villages, they made mud bricks in order to construct buildings for a clinic, a Bible school and dormitories. They testified that it was God's Word that inspired them to serve Him cheerfully and faithfully and to have a special burden for the African women and children. They were a great encouragement to other missionaries who followed in their footsteps.

A great majority of lady missionaries were single lady missionaries. God has a special place for them. The Apostle Paul mentions that there is a difference between a married woman and a virgin in the service of God. We read in 1 Corinthians 7:34, "The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit: but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband."

We have considered the biblical ministry of single lady missionaries. We shall now consider the biblical ministry of the missionary wives. These lady missionaries who work alongside their husbands need to recognise that their roles as spouse, mother, educator and health-care giver are all equally important. Proverbs 31:27 tells us that a virtuous woman cares for her household; "she looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness." She "worketh willingly with her hands. She is like the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from afar. She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household" (Prov 31:13-15).

Wives are to submit themselves unto their own husbands, "as unto the Lord" (Eph 5:22). The role of a wife is to be the supporter, encourager and the best friend of her husband, serving the Lord together in mutual love and respect. Husbands are to love their wives, "even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it" (Eph 5:25). Their children are "an heritage of the LORD" (Ps 127:3).

Actually, the missionary wife's most important mission field is her children. She and her husband have the first responsibility of evangelising their children, making disciples of them for the Lord. Prov 22:6 gives a wonderful promise: "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." It is indeed the duty of missionary parents to bring up their children "in the nurture and admonition of the

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Lord” (Eph 6:4). They must also pray daily for their children, asking the Lord for wisdom and guidance in this vital ministry.

Deuteronomy 6:5-9 emphasises that “these words, which I (God) command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down and when thou risest up.” Truly, missionary parents desire and pray that their children will indeed “set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments” (Ps 78:7).

The importance of a God-fearing family—God-fearing parents nurturing God-fearing children—cannot be overemphasised. A God-fearing family brings glory to God, and is a channel of blessing to man.

The Lord Jesus Himself asked His disciples to “Feed my lambs” and “Feed my sheep” (John 21:15-17). Missionaries are responsible to evangelise children as well as adults. Child evangelism is taught in Matt 18:14. “Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.” Lady missionaries have many opportunities to help in teaching Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, Young People’s meetings, special outreach at Christmas and Easter, camps, etc. Besides evangelism, they must feed their flock with the Word of God regularly and thoroughly so that they will “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Pet 3:18). The goal of ministry is to nurture the believers to be conformed to the image of Christ. May we be able to say with the Apostle John in 3 John 4, “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.” Praise the Lord!

The lady missionaries, single and married, reach out to draw people to the Lord through kindness and hospitality. The virtuous woman “openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness. ... She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy.”

Miss Joan Davenport, missionary to Bethlehem, via Israel, under our Mission Board, has been reaching out to draw the Arabs in Bethlehem to the saving knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. She is giving of her life wholly to exalt Christ and to witness for Him in this difficult mission field. Besides teaching ladies the Word of God, she teaches children, including the handicapped. And she is deeply concerned about

the young people whom she has led to the Lord. The “Kids to Kamp” ministry is held every summer at Baraka Bible Conference Centre. Miss Joan Davenport asks for prayer that the young people will grow in the Lord, put Him first, and be strengthened in their faith. She desires to see them drawn closer to the Lord and His House, and not be drawn away by the world.

The young people of Baraka need your prayer support and encouragement. Miss Joan Davenport needs our prayers and encouragement too. She also needs another lady missionary to assist her at Baraka. She desires to make Baraka a place of Christian witness and testimony. She asks your help in prayer and for the work at Baraka to go forward. Please remember these prayer requests in your heart. May God answer them according to His perfect will.

God’s Word tells us to redeem the time “because the days are evil” (Eph 5:16). Lady missionaries are facing a changing world today with many difficulties and challenges. They need to trust and depend fully upon the Lord for His wisdom and strength in their service for the King as well as their spiritual warfare against Satan. Praise God, by His grace we can say, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (Rom 1:16). We are reminded that it is His work and we are His instruments used by Him for His glory.

The doctrine of the sovereignty of God gives great comfort and hope to every Christian, especially to lady missionaries. May we look unto the Lord who is the all-wise and ever-faithful God. The Lord reigneth! He is reigning over this changing world. May He reign in our hearts. He says, “Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness” (Isa 41:10). The Lord Jesus Christ Himself promised, “lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”

Lady missionaries of the Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions need your prayer support. Please use the monthly “Praise & Prayer Network” to remember the needs of these co-labourers before the Lord. May our lady missionaries and lady missionaries to come be richly blessed by the Lord as they serve Him with grateful

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hearts, faithfully and lovingly. May the Lord of the harvest raise up more labourers, even lady missionaries today!

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor 15:58).

Mrs Leah Paauwe is the wife of Rev Edward Paauwe—general secretary of the Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions, USA. The above message was delivered on August 9, 1999 at the Missionary Conference of Life Bible-Presbyterian Church, Singapore.

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courses will be conducted in the months of February, June/July, and November/December. The independent study courses are to be done in ministry during the two interim periods of the year (Feb-Jun/Jul, and Jul/Aug-Nov). All independent study assignments and papers are due on the first day of each residential session. Thirty students have registered. Thus far, 6 residential courses have been conducted by FEBC lecturers—Dr Jeffrey Khoo: (1) Westminster Standards, (2) Charismatism; Rev Charles Seet: (3) Pentateuch, (4) OT Historical Books; Rev Das Koshy: (5) Pastoral Epistles, and (6) 1 Peter.

Rev **Colin Wong** (BTh '87) with FEBC student—**Mark Chen**—spent 6 days in Ho Chin Minh City, Vietnam, June 7-12, '99, to conduct courses on discipleship, on knowing God's will, and on heaven and hell to pastors and lay leaders there.

Rev **Charles Seet** (BTh '90, MDiv '97), FEBC's lecturer in Biblical studies was invited to speak at the inauguration of Calvary Bible Training Centre (Komplex Orchid Park Kav 6, Batam Centre, Pulau Batam 29432, Indonesia) started by Rev **Kiantoro Lie** (BTh '92, MRE '98) on August 15, '99. Rev Seet reports, “In addition, the four young people who have offered their lives for fulltime service—Sahala, Siti, Aguni and Wati—have begun their training for the ministry at the newly inaugurated Calvary Bible Training Centre, which is the brainchild of Rev Kiantoro Lie, pastor of Calvary Batam B-P Church. Together with Lenni, a Chinese Christian from Calvary Batam who has also given her life to the Lord, these four are now staying in the dorms of the Bible Training Centre, and attend

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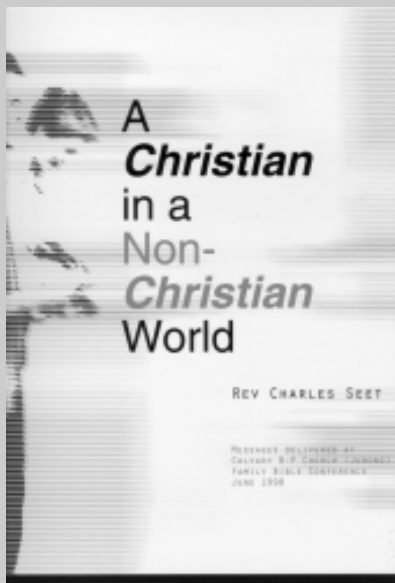
lectures in the morning and evenings, covering subjects such as: Talk Thru the Bible, Introduction to Christian Theology, Old Testament History, Child Development, Personal Evangelism, Basic Computer skills, King James English, English Conversation and English Grammar. These subjects and others are taken by the students for two semesters in order to prepare them for their definitive training at FEBC next year. The intensive training in the English language is especially intended for this purpose. All morning chapels and lectures are taught in English and students will be fined if they spoke in any other language! The three evening courses are taught in Indonesian and are open to other church members. Thus far, about 22 have already signed up for them.

“Besides speaking that evening on the topic, ‘Training for the Lord’s Work,’ I was also blessed with the opportunity to start the first day of classes for the students on Monday morning with a chapel hour message. Do pray for the students and their lecturers—Rev Kiantoro Lie, Ev **Roska Sihombing** (DipTh ’89), Ev **Phoa Ang Liang** (BTh ’97), and Pr Suhandi Supandi. The spacious facilities of Calvary Batam B-P Church are ideal for this Bible Training Centre, with two dormitories equipped with desks and beds, a library with 600 titles (both English and Indonesian theology books), four computers, a classroom, kitchen and dining hall. Morning chapels are held in the church sanctuary upstairs.”

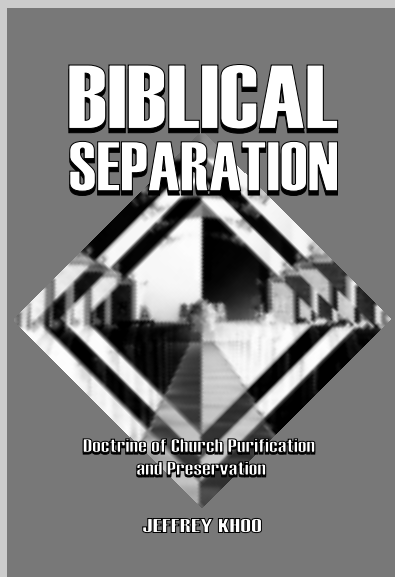
Rev **Pang Kok Hiong** (BTh ’92) was called to testify last June before 22 US senators and the House of Representatives concerning his ministry and the situation in Saipan, from June 21-27, 1999. He reported, “They assured us that they would not pass any bill that would kill the ministry Satan is certainly unhappy with us for reaching out to our kinsmen with the gospel. More than a thousand precious souls have been saved and baptised over the past few years. To God be the glory!” Rev and Mrs Pang are back ministering in Saipan with **Ho Heng Sau** (BTh, ’98) assisting. Please do pray that the Lord will heal Mrs Pang who is suffering from a chronic liver infection.

George Skariah (BTh ’94, MDiv ’96) was conferred the degree of Master of Theology (ThM) by Singapore Bible College on May 14, ’99. He and his wife—**Bessy Geevarghese** (MRE ’96)—are teaching at the Jubilee Memorial Bible College in India.

Errol Stone (BTh ’98) has started a new work called Faith Presbyterian Church. Ivan Toms (CertBS ’98) is assisting him. His address: 10 George Street, Stirling, Western Australia 6021. Phone: 93454446, fax: 93444129, e-mail: edstone@space.net.au.



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A Christian in a Non-Christian World

by Charles Seet

The world exerts a tremendous influence in the life of the Christian, and that influence is increasing by the day. Hence, it is not surprising that some Christians are also wrapped up in the affairs of this world, embracing its values and chasing its dreams. The Biblical solution is not for the Christian to withdraw himself from the world. Instead, he is exhorted to shine forth as a beacon of truth. The Christian is to be so radically different in his values that his life becomes a rebuke to the world as well as a stepping stone for unbelievers to come to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

This book examines some practical aspects of a Christian's life, and provides biblical principles to help the Christian face the challenges and pressures of living in a non-Christian world.

Biblical Separation

by Jeffrey Khoo

"Dr Khoo has carefully and thoroughly analyzed the commands of separation in the three sections of the Old Testament, the commands of the Lord on separation in the Four Gospels, plus the exhortations on separation by the writers of the other New Testament books. He has also researched and given us valuable quotations from God's servants through the centuries.

"In this day, with growing dishonesty in the pulpit, every pastor needs the refresher course this book offers. Every Christian in the pew will be strengthened by reviewing what God has commanded and preserved for us for our day. Obedience is the test of orthodoxy. The great gulf between belief and unbelief is as great as the gulf between heaven and hell (Luke 16:26; John 3:18)"
(Dr Arthur Steele).

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Far Eastern Bible College Family Picnic at Fort Canning Park, September 3, 1999