

Learning from the past

I frequently bemoan the terrible current state of affairs in the church, along with all other sound evangelicals, due to the current general apostasy. It would be of some benefit, therefore, to look at some characteristics of churches and believers in the past to learn from their experience. One reason for this is to show that the admonitions by people like myself are not unreasonable quirks, but are supported by the great and the good in history.

Church Doctrines

Catastrophism

Until the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species* all sound theologians (and in fact most people in general) believed that the processes that formed the earth were the result of single catastrophic events, such as creation and a global flood, occurring during a brief period of earth's history. The only people who taught otherwise were some obscure ancient Greek philosophers, the priests of some oriental occult religions and a few speculative Victorian scientists.

Then Darwin popularised Hutton & Lyell's¹ idea that, on the contrary, earth's processes resulted from gradualism. This was part of the theory of Uniformitarianism; the idea that the events which formed the earth in the past were the same as the processes that we observe today, such as rain and wind erosion.

Such processes occur slowly, requiring millions of years to complete; this necessitates a very old earth and such a time frame enables the theory of evolution to exist. Without an old earth the theory of evolution is dead in the water. Uniformitarianism states that the earth is 4.6 billion years old whereas the advocates of catastrophism (especially Biblical commentators and theologians) always believed that the earth was only 6-7,000 years old.

Until the late 19th century all sound evangelicals held that a young earth was axiomatic. The corollary of this was the firm belief that a global flood was true and that creation was *ex nihilo* by divine fiat.² This, in turn, meant that the Bible was absolutely accurate in its statements about creation. Of course, the widespread acceptance of both evolutionary theory and Uniformitarianism meant that very many people no longer accepted the Bible's veracity. If it was wrong about creation then it could be wrong about everything else. Thus liberalism was born and atheism given a boost.

The point

All evangelicals believed in a young earth and catastrophism.

The modern problem

Very many supposed evangelicals believe in evolution or theistic evolution (a compromised form) and hold to Uniformitarian principles.

¹ James Hutton (a Scottish naturalist) and geologist Charles Lyell. The initial principles of uniformitarianism were first published in 1830.

² That is, created by God out of nothing.

Evolutionary theory

Following on from the demise of catastrophism, we need to mention the theory of evolution.

We need not spend a lot of time on this because no one, and I mean no one, believed in this in Britain until after the Enlightenment (but it was an ancient pagan belief).³ As time went on and atheism began to take hold there was some speculation by certain free thinkers about the origins of man; but even then there was no real, formal agreed doctrine about evolutionary theory.

Some individuals who held to a form of natural selection and evolutionary thought were

- William Wells 1813
- Patrick Matthew 1831
- James Pritchard & William Lawrence 1813
- Erasmus Darwin (Charles' grandfather) 1794; he anticipated almost every point of his grandson's work (but was never credited) especially in his book *Zoonomia* (1794).
- Thomas Malthus 1798
- Jean-Baptiste de Lamarck (1744-1829). Lyell credited him with originating the idea of evolution.
- Edward Blythe
- J Stanley Grimes
- Robert Chambers
- William Paley discusses selective elimination in his *Natural Theology*.
- Charles Naudin
- Benjamin Franklin 1751

Before these one has to look to French Catholics, such as:

- Benoit de Maillet 1656-1738; uniformitarian theories of cosmic and geologic evolution. Total organic evolution and occult ideas.
- Pierre de Maupertuis 1698-1759; friend of Voltaire, natural selection and mutations.
- Comte de Buffon 1707-1788; one of the greatest scientists of the 18c. Authored 44 vol. *Histoire Naturelle*, including implications of most of later teachings of Lyell and Darwin.

Before all of these one has to examine the speculations of Greek philosophers (such as Epicurus, Aristotle, Anaximander, Leucippus, Democritus, Xenophanes, Heraclitus, Empedocles) and teachings of false religions in the East (e.g. Confucianism, Taoism, Sankhya Hinduism, Animism), going back to Babylonian roots. Even the Jewish Encyclopaedia supports evolution.

A key person to develop evolutionary theory was the spiritualist anarchist Alfred Russel Wallace who wrote a paper on natural selection in 1855 and sent it to Darwin for evaluation whilst in Malaysia. It said all that Darwin thought. Lyell persuaded Darwin to publish his delayed book immediately. Wallace's paper was read at the Linnaean Society (arranged by Lyell) in London in July 1858 along with an earlier letter by Darwin outlining his theories.

After this Darwin's *Origin of Species* was published and the rest is well known history.

³ It is ironic that the rise of rationalism, which encouraged evolutionary theory, was nothing but a return to ancient pagan ideas about origins. In an effort to get rid of God from cosmogony, rationalists assumed ancient pagan ideas which had long been ridiculed as irrational.

The point

Western intellectuals, in general, had no thought about evolutionary ideas until the late 1700s. There was no widespread movement about such notions until the later 1800s. Virtually no Christian had any evolutionary ideas until the late 19th century.

The modern problem

Evolutionary theory is now commonly accepted, and taught in schools, as a scientific fact. The media, and especially the BBC, treat it as axiomatic and deride creationism whenever possible. Some media personalities (such as Richard Dawkins and David Attenborough) see it as their life's mission to establish evolution as a fact.

Sadly, very many Christians have acquiesced to this pressure and are either evolutionists or theistic evolutionists. The fact is that no evolutionary theory is compatible with Scripture. Since creation was accepted by Jesus, then accepting evolutionary theory, in any form, puts a believer in opposition to the Lord; not a safe place to be.

Calvinism

After the Reformation, all the churches that were initially planted in Britain were Calvinistic. The Church of England that was further developed by Elizabeth I was allowed to be essentially Calvinistic, but not as strong as the Calvinism on the Continent. Many of the church leaders and advisors of Elizabeth I were very strong Calvinists, as evidenced by the Lambeth Articles, which were not authorised for the church because they featured predestination too heavily for the Queen who sought compromise to steady the country. However, the Thirty-Nine Articles were authorised and these too are basically Calvinistic.

The Puritan movement, which followed, was initially a desire of Calvinists to further reform the Elizabethan state church to be more Biblical. This movement continued to have an impact for hundreds of years, right up to the modern day. It waxed and waned according to political intrigue; its worst days being after the restoration of Charles II when 2,000 Puritan dissenters were ejected from their pastorates. Great Puritans in the Anglican Church include William Perkins and his disciple William Ames.

Over time more dissenters formed their own branch of Calvinism. The Congregationalists were once a very strong group containing some of the best theologians that the country has ever known, such as: John Owen and Thomas Goodwin.⁴ Differing from the Anglicans and Presbyterian Puritans chiefly on baptism and church polity, they formed their own confession of faith strongly influenced by the Westminster Confession, The Savoy Declaration.

The first Baptist church in England was established in 1612 in Spitalfields under Thomas Helwys, based upon a separatist group that had been in exile in Amsterdam formed by John Smith. Helwys returned to England after Smith's death. These were Arminians; the first formal church of Arminians in the country (though there had been a few Arminian Puritans such as John Goodwin). These bucked the trend for Calvinism and were called General Baptists. However shortly after this a group of Calvinistic Baptists (called Particular Baptists) was formed in England after 1633 as a secession from the Jacob-Lathrop-Jessey church (named after subsequent pastors). By 1660 there were about 300 Baptist churches in England. Although credobaptist, the early method of baptism was by affusion (pouring); immersion began after 1640.

⁴ I am not saying that I agree with everything every Puritan said. Some emphases were wrong footed, such as Preparationism and certain ideas about a second blessing for assurance.

So although there were some Arminian Baptists by 1612, many Baptists were Calvinistic. Their confession of 1689 (the Second London Baptist Confession) was heavily influenced by the Calvinistic Westminster Confession.

Before the Arminian Methodism of John Wesley, and often later associated with the preaching of George Whitefield, there was a movement in Wales under godly preachers that drew together large numbers of converts and formed these into new churches. These became known as Calvinistic Methodists due to the influence of Whitefield. Eventually this became a sort of Church of Wales. Most of the chapels that are now being converted to homes in Wales were originally Calvinistic-Methodist churches.

Precursors of this movement had been Griffith Jones, a powerful preacher from Llandowror, Daniel Rowland, Howell Davies, William Williams and Howell Harris. The first Methodist Association met in 1742, two years before Wesley's earliest conference. Initially they saw themselves as part of the Church of England, but after a period of antagonism, they seceded. Formal secession steps began in 1795.

To make life complicated, the term Calvinistic-Methodists, was also given to groups formed as a result of Whitefield's ministry, especially those belonging to the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion. However, the chief point is that all these groups were broadly Calvinistic, as a result of Whitefield's influence.

The next large new dimension in the British church was the Plymouth Brethren Movement, also initially formed within the Anglican Church, largely by an Irish minister called John Nelson Darby. In time this also seceded to form a separate church denomination, and it, in turn, suffered fragmentation due to the overbearing measures of Darby. However, our point here is that although this movement later succumbed to the Dispensationalism of Edward Irving's group (Darby was not the founder as many believe, but rather the populariser) in the early stages, at least, the Brethren were Calvinistic. This is affirmed by no less an authority than GH Lang, well-known Brethren teacher, preacher and writer. This is hard to support since the Brethren were opposed to systematic dogmatics, creeds and confessions. One has to go by their printed speeches, letters, tracts and sermons. However, it would be a strong-minded man to oppose a clear statement on this matter by such an authority as Lang. Furthermore, historians have also affirmed that John Darby was a staunch defender of predestination and particular redemption.⁵

Finally we have to mention the situation north of the border in Scotland, but this is so well known that it needs little comment. The Reformation took hold in Scotland largely by the tireless efforts of John Knox. Knox brought his Calvinistic ideas straight from Geneva where he learned them at the feet of Calvin himself. That Scotland has been a stronghold of Calvinistic Presbyterianism for centuries is axiomatic.

Perhaps a little mention needs to be made of Ireland, which clearly is largely Roman Catholic. The Church of England formed a Church of Ireland in the earliest days and this church was one of the first in the UK to publish a confession; being independently minded. The Irish Articles, chiefly penned by Bishop James Ussher, were set out in 1615 and influenced by the Lambeth Articles (1595); this is long before the Westminster Confession of 1643-6.

⁵ James R. Findlay, Jr., *Dwight L. Moody: American Evangelist 1837-1899* (The University of Chicago Press, 1969), p127. Lyle W. Dorsett, *A Passion for Souls: The Life of D. L. Moody* (Moody Press, 1997), p136-137.

The point

It can clearly be seen that almost all the church movements in Britain, and all the ones that were initially created after the Reformation, were completely Calvinistic in their outlook and doctrine. The collapse into an Arminian majority did not take place until after the Moody-Sankey campaigns in the late 19th century.

The modern problem

True Calvinism is now in a very slim minority. There are large numbers who claim to be Calvinistic but, on inspection, one finds that most of these are actually Amyraldian (4-Point Calvinists).

Charismatic doctrine

Throughout 1900 years of church history the Lord gave grace to godly men and women in many nations of the world. These tirelessly worked to the glory of God and for the truth of the Gospel in a variety of functions.

Some men were theologians who forged the truth into systematic presentations to aid understanding and who courageously fought against heresy, even to the cost of their own lives. We could name Gottschalk, who died in prison for the truth of predestination. Jan Hus who was killed for preaching the true Gospel in Bohemia. Girolamo Savonarola for preaching the Gospel, aiding the poor and reforming the city of Florence.

Many theologians were not called to martyrdom, but nevertheless gave their whole lives to the exposition of the truth. Some of these had an impact that continues to this day. We could name Martin Luther, John Calvin, Athanasius (who was exiled five times), Augustine of Hippo, Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory Nazianzus, the authors of the Westminster Confession, Guido de Brès, and many others.

Some men were not theologians, as such, but were gifted in clearly preaching the Gospel. Through their ministry thousands were converted to Christ. We could name George Whitefield, CH Spurgeon, Murray McCheyne, John Bunyan as just a few. While these served in their own countries (largely) others were called to be missionaries overseas and prevail through the most awful circumstances and fearful attacks of primitive warlike tribes. The list of these is endless, they include, William Carey the pioneer missionary to India. Hudson Taylor, who established the China Inland Mission. CT Studd who worked in China and then in Africa, having first given away his fortune, and JG Paton who worked amongst the South Sea Islanders in the New Hebrides. Women too did sterling work as missionaries such as Mary Slessor in West Africa, Amy Carmichael in India and Gladys Aylward in China.

But preaching and teaching were not the only gifts that God gave in his mercy; he called some people to establish schools and orphanages. Spurgeon formed both schools, and orphanages which continue to this day but the most famous builder of orphanages is probably George Muller who built them by faith in Bristol, but Thomas Barnardo also did a strong work in London. Other great men and women did work in prisons, brought aid to the poor, worked amongst prostitutes, sought to relieve child labour and so on.

Now all this is to say nothing of those ordinary men who built and established strong churches around the country and served them faithfully their whole lives bringing multitudes to a firm faith in Christ, such as Benjamin Keach, John Gill, Richard Baxter, William Grimshaw and many others.

There is no doubt that the greatest work in serving Christ in history was done before the modern age; we now live where church leaders are not only comfortable but where many are affluent and some are as rich as Croesus.⁶

However, the point I want to make is that Charismatic theology demands that all these great servants of God, who achieved tremendous exploits, were second-class citizens and that the ordinary Charismatic is greater! According to Charismatic and Pentecostal teaching these people did not possess the Holy Spirit in the way that they do.

The fulcrum of their teaching is that there is a special experience that Christians must have called the 'baptism in (with) the Holy Spirit'. This is a second-blessing, post conversion, mystical experience which gives the ordinary believer power to witness. Without this experience the believer lacks power and is a second-class disciple.

Now, there is no space here to contend against this utterly false doctrine, which we have done elsewhere.⁷ However, it is clearly discounted on the basis of history alone. To dismiss the sterling work done by previous generations who did not have this experience is clearly folly. Then again, the historic work of great saints far exceeds the miserable exploits of modern church leaders in spiritual power. Clearly those without this Charismatic baptism did far greater exploits than those with it.

A clear comparison of the works of great saints in history and the works of modern Charismatics shows that the moderns are dust in the scales. There are hardly enough books in the world to detail the great works in church history where whole nations were converted on occasions and the whole of history changed by key men.⁸ On the contrary, the situation that prevails today is an unmitigated disaster.

To just take the UK: since the Charismatic Movement brought the heresies of the Pentecostal Movement into the mainstream we have seen the overall numbers of Christians in this country diminish by a large margin. Giving to the poor and needy is hugely reduced while the affluence of church leaders has increased. Missionary societies have closed and those that have not are struggling to put missionaries in place, despite crying needs. The state of the nation's morals have fallen through the floor (despite promises that a Charismatic revival would do the opposite) and lawlessness now abounds to a previously unknown degree.

Further than this, as if it isn't enough, the state of people in Charismatic churches is so appalling that many sound commentators agree that the majority of people in them are not saved at all. This is largely because the Gospel message has been so corrupted and cheapened that it is not Biblical. People are accepted as truly converted without any conviction of sin, any testing of their faith and without any repentance. Such converts continue in the same lifestyle as before without any shame. Thus we see the moral state of Charismatic church members to be, in general, very low. Even in their camping

⁶ For those without a classical education Croesus was the King of Lydia c.560–546 BC. He expanded his domains to include all the Greek cities on the coast of Asia Minor, and the stories of his wealth indicate the extent of his power. However, he was unable to withstand Cyrus the Great, and after his defeat Lydia entered the Persian Empire of the Achaemenids – that is the family ruling the Persian Empire, named after Cyrus' ancestor.

⁷ See the author's paper on the '*Baptism in the Spirit*'.

⁸ John Knox changed Scotland for the better right up to the present day. Before him Scotland was considered by Europe as a backward nation of ill-educated barbarians. Calvin is credited with establishing the Protestant work ethic, which still applies in the west today. Without the reformers there would have been no democratic nations championing civil liberty; we would all be under despotic Catholic rulers.

conventions security firms stated that fornication was as prevalent as in secular rock festivals.

Indeed, in most Charismatic churches we see that meetings are geared up for the unconverted. Churches are made to be attractive to those in the world and the Gospel dumbed-down so that it is not threatening to sinners. The church has become the world, and the world is the enemy of God according to Scripture. Indeed, if we analyse their Gospel message we see a variation of Arminianism, Amyraldism (at best), a cheap Gospel, easy-believism, free-willism and an acceptance of conversion on the basis of a mystical experience (such as when a person falls to the floor in an altered state of consciousness).

The point

Examining the whole of history one can clearly see that before the lie of Charismatic theology took hold God did great things through humble men and women who lived their lives on the basis of the truth of God's word.

The modern problem

Today, Charismatics either ignore or corrupt God's word and the result of their ministry is a shambles, and sometimes malevolent.

There is no doubt that history proves Charismatic theology to be false.

Global revivalism

In the ancient church it is true that there were some premillennialists, even amongst the church fathers, However, these were in the minority and the premillennialism was the 'Historic' variety and not the modern Dispensational Premillennialism, which is far different. Up to the Reformation the vast majority of believers were amillennial and postmillennialism was largely absent.

During the Reformation the reformers were amillennial and by this time premillennialism was derided as 'chiliasm',⁹ and not even worth criticising. There were a few radicals who held some postmillennial ideas, but these were considered as the fringe, or even outlawed, participants of the Reformation.

As the Reformation progressed some variations began to occur. A significant part of the British Puritan movement developed postmillennial ideas, believing that the Gospel would increasingly take hold of the nations and eventually a golden age would arise as a result. This traditional postmillennialism is not to be confused with the modern triumphal forms found today; it was solely based on the increasing impact of the Gospel and the numerical advancement of the church creating a bigger social influence. Of course, many Puritans were also Erastians or had ideas close to it, so postmillennialism made sense.¹⁰

Even so, the post-reformation period saw amillennialism as the main view up to the mid-19th century. As the new century approached, many in the mid-1800s developed an interest in prophecy and wild ideas about the end began to flourish. Many conferences were devoted to this theme. In this hysteria Dispensationalism developed in the heretical and scandalous church led by Edward Irving. Some of the key features of it (such as a pre-tribulation secret rapture) originated from the trance experiences of Margaret Macdonald, who was a young girl prone to delusions and sickness (some would say as a result of occult

⁹ Based upon the Greek word *chilia* meaning 'a thousand'.

¹⁰ Erastianism is the idea that the church and the state are interconnected and that the state governs the church.

influences).¹¹ The idea that Dispensationalism arose from John Darby was a later fabrication, chiefly promulgated in William Kelly's works, in order to cleanse the origins from scandal. However, it is true that Darby largely popularised the innovative theology, which went worldwide with the publication of the Scofield Bible and its Dispensational notes. While all this was going on, very few people clung to postmillennial hopes.

In fact it was in the latter half of the 20th century that Banner of Truth revived the idea by publishing, *'The Puritan Hope'* which was an evaluation of Puritan postmillennialism; they did this because so few UK Christians knew anything about it. In this period some Reformed theologians in America were developing a new form of postmillennialism that was far more radical; this was the Reconstructionism, or Theonomy, of people like Rousas Rushdoony (now deceased), Gary DeMar, Gary North, David Chilton and Greg Bahnsen. This demanded that nations should adopt the Law of Moses again and rule the world by its strictures.¹²

It was in this same time frame (in fact beginning in the later 1940s) that another new form of postmillennialism began to appear in Pentecostal circles, which had been long committed to Dispensationalism. This was the Latter Rain theology that arose in overheated revivalist circumstances in Canada and soon spread like wildfire in the states. This was the utterly heretical, and even crazy, ideas of people like Franklin Hall and William Branham.¹³ Though initially outlawed by the Assemblies of God churches for heresy, this movement inspired the 1950s Healing Movement before it went dormant for several decades.

However, it re-emerged in the 1980s UK Restoration Movement and then the Signs and Wonders Movement (or 'Third Wave') led by John Wimber. Extreme versions were manifest in sects like the Kansas City Prophets and offshoots were later seen in the various heretical 'revivals' of the 1990s (such as the Toronto Blessing and the Pensacola Revival). It is now seen most clearly in the New Apostolic Reformation of C Peter Wagner and many aspects of Latter Rain theology are now endemic in most Charismatic churches. Expressions like the heretical revivalism of Todd Bentley are pure Latter Rain.

As a result of this corruption of theology and practice, the focus of most Charismatics is now the earth rather than heaven, usually formulated around some hope for a global revival where the church rules the world in supernatural power.¹⁴

Charismatics criticise traditional believers who set their sights on heaven and the return of Christ as hoping for, *'pie in the sky when you die'*.¹⁵ Instead they twist certain prophetic Scriptures completely out of their context and claim that passages which speak of the glory of God covering the earth are for now rather than after the Day of Judgment.¹⁶ The whole ethos of Restorationist Charismania (apostolic Charismatics) is that the end of the church period will be greater than the beginning of it in worldly terms.

¹¹ Note that an esteemed Brethren leader and historian, S. P. Tregelles, said that the idea came from a false spirit prompting a vision in Irving's church. He denied Darby's claim to be the originator of Dispensationalism.

¹² For more information see my paper, *'A simple critique of Dominionism.'*

¹³ For more information see my paper in, *'The Rescue Package – Charismatic Background'*.

¹⁴ Latter Rain alleges that end-time apostles and prophets will not only rule the world but will be able to fly, be invulnerable to bullets and will be able to walk through walls. This is but the tip of the iceberg of their foolish teachings.

¹⁵ In fact this is a Biblical command: Col 3:1-3; Matt 6:19; Rm 8:4; Phil 3:19; 1 Jn 2:15.

¹⁶ See my paper, *'Over Anticipating the Kingdom'*.

The simple fact, however, is that apostolic teaching and the words of Christ himself teach us otherwise. For example, ‘when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?’ (Lk 18:8; the Greek construction prompts a negative response); or the warnings of a coming apostasy (2 Thess 2:1-12; 1 Tim 4:1-2). The Charismatic hope for a super-powered church ruling the earth through apostles and prophets is a lie.

The sinister aspect of all this is that this movement is actually a preparation for the end-time apostate church that will function hand-in-glove with a fascist, totalitarian, anti-Christian world empire. Thus radical Charismatics have already formed alliances with both Reconstructionist Postmillennialists and Roman Catholics; all preparation for a global apostate church, which is the servant of a future, wicked, world empire. Charismatics are sleepwalking into destruction.

The point

Sound, historic Christians overwhelmingly adopted an amillennial view of the Second Coming. This meant that they had a pilgrim view to being on earth and were prepared to suffer and be disadvantaged in the world in order to serve God and preach the Gospel. They were prepared to sacrifice earthly comforts because they believed that after the Day of Judgment they would receive rewards for this sacrifice on a restored earth in fellowship with Christ in glory, where earth and heaven meet for the first time. Their eyes were focused upon a heavenly city where Christ is. They looked to Christ and cared nothing for their lives on earth.

The modern problem

Charismatics have spread the false idea that the prophecies regarding the glory of God covering the earth are for now; that the restoration of all things is now. They have an over-anticipation of the kingdom of God and claim that certain spiritual benefits for the new world are obtainable now, if we have faith. Thus they teach that a global revival is coming soon whereby the church will become the dominant power on earth and will rule the world through super apostles and prophets.

This leads individual Christians to have a view of earthly manifestations of the kingdom; it teaches people to focus upon the earth and its forms rather than heaven where Christ is. It demands an earthly kingdom instead of a spiritual one. It also leads to unreasonable expectations of healing, health, security, affluence and prosperity when Scripture actually tells us to expect tribulation and persecution. In its worst expressions, this false Charismatic hope also leads to demands for violence in the tension between conservatives and radicals. Several Charismatic prophets have already called for the death of Christians who oppose this false teaching, including Benny Hinn, Paul Crouch and Rick Joyner.¹⁷

The fear of God

The fear of God is a fundamental Christian disposition. A person who has no fear of God at all cannot be a genuine believer. This is a very important doctrine and one that is currently ignored and avoided; but at a cost.

There are two types of fear of God.

¹⁷ For more information on this and other aspects of Charismania see my book, ‘*Charismatic Catastrophe*’. To give but one example, regarding his critics Benny Hinn said, on air, ‘*I wish I could just ... find one verse that says, “If you don’t like ‘em, kill ‘em”... don’t attack God’s servants ... you stink... I wish God would give me a Holy Ghost machine gun – I blow your head off.*’ [Trinity Broadcasting Network; *Praise The Lord Show*, 9.11.90.]

The first is judgmental fear; it is the fear of sinners who are afraid of facing a holy God and being sentenced to hell for their sins. It is the fear that exists outside the church by those who have some knowledge of God. If this fear is not acted upon by believing the Gospel, then it either fades away as sin takes over, or it grows into a trembling depression, awaiting death with foreboding. Christians do not have this kind of fear of condemnation.

The second is filial fear; the fear that a good son has to his father. All Christians must possess this fear – and note, it is true fear; the Greek word used is *phobos*, whence we get ‘phobia’ (e.g. Eph 5:21; 1 Pt 2:17). The Hebrew word *yirah* also means ‘terror’. Those who possess this fear of God will grow in grace, knowledge and wisdom (Job 28:28; Ps 111:10; Prov 1:7). Those who fear God will also fear sin and seek to avoid it because they want to please their Father.¹⁸ There is no holiness without the fear of God (2 Cor 7:1).

For those people who try to avoid this and who refer to, ‘For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind’ (2 Tim 1:7), the word ‘fear’ here is not *phobos* but *deilia* meaning cowardice or timidity. Christians should not be timid (fearing man) but should fear God.

From the early church onwards, for centuries, these two fears were plainly understood and accepted by all. Until the Reformation, the Roman Church used the fear of God as a foundation for her own authority. The fear of God was usurped into the hands of the church and utilised for corrupt ends to maintain power. The natural desire to avoid hell-fire was taken by the church, thus forcing all men to submit to the power of Rome if they were to fear God.

Rome used this power, not only to dominate ordinary people, but also to threaten kings. Make no mistake; the threat of excommunication was terrifying because it meant that you were destined to hell. Although the picture of Henry VIII ignoring this action may be before most Englishmen’s minds, one should remember others cases that were more normal.

In 1170, Henry II (1154-1189) was indirectly responsible for the death of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas à Becket, in that four of his knights¹⁹ observed his casual request that someone would rid him of the pest who would not submit to his laws. All of Europe, and especially the pope, were scandalised. A massive gesture of penitence was imposed by the pope in order to avoid the threat of excommunication. So, a year later, the king of England (and a powerful king at that) walked barefoot through the streets of Canterbury, wearing nothing but a sackcloth shirt, while being whipped with branches. He knelt at the cathedral porch and with bleeding feet, kissed the stone where Becket had died. Then followed penitence and absolution by being beaten; three strokes from each of eighty monks, and five strokes from each of various bishops and abbots. Unwashed, he then spent the night in the dark cathedral crypt, fasting and praying, nearly dying of cold. This is how great the fear of God affected a king.

Henry IV (1050–1106) was King of the Romans and Holy Roman Emperor from 1084 until his forced abdication in 1105. He was the third emperor of the Salian dynasty and one of the most powerful people in the 11th century. Henry had fallen foul of the pope, mainly over who controlled the investiture of church officers. The pope had also been briefly kidnapped, which he blamed on Henry. So the pope excommunicated the king and the king tried to depose the pope. A Diet (council) of German princes called for Henry to repent

¹⁸ For more on this subject see my papers, ‘*The fear of God*’ and ‘*The fear of the fear of God*’.

¹⁹ Richard Brito, Hugh de Moreville, Reginald FitzUrse, and William de Tracy.

before the excommunication was ratified. At first he refused but later acceded. He stood barefoot in the snow, wearing only wearing a hairshirt, outside the gates of the castle of Canossa for three days, from 25 January to 27 January 1077, begging the pope to rescind the sentence, and taking no food or shelter. The Pope lifted the excommunication, imposing a vow to comply with certain conditions.

So the threat of excommunication brought a powerful English king and an equally powerful Holy Roman Emperor to their knees in penance.

The fear of God was seen in normal social life in many events right up to modern times. It was unheard of that a man would walk into a church building with a hat on, even if there was no service taking place. This was true up until the 1980s. Today, supposed Christian worship leaders stand on stages in front of rock bands sporting bandannas or baseball caps; despite prohibition of this in Scripture (1 Cor 11:4).

Though many disreputable people found it easy to lie, they found it less easy to do this in court, under oath, swearing on the Bible. When they considered themselves to be in the presence of God under oath, they feared lying. There are also many superstitions held by simple people which have to do with fear of retribution and offending God.

In the true Christian church the fear of God was evidenced in the godliness of her leaders and ministers. Such people demonstrated their genuine filial fear of God in their words, actions and ministry. Books were written on the fear of God and many as sermon explained this doctrine to the people. In times of persecution, all sorts of people, from the very young to the very old, chose to suffer martyrdom rather than go against the fear of God.

Not so long ago zealous believers were so attuned to the fear of God that they felt their fortunes were a hindrance to the pursuit of their ministry. More than one gave their whole fortune away, CT Studd being but one example who, because of the fear of God, stood against his parents' desires and went as a missionary to China, living in arduous poverty. Another missionary, because of the fear of God, sacrificed his budding career as a concert pianist and also went to China. Today we see Charismatic leaders so rich that it ought to be an embarrassment to them to take money from their poor supporters; but it is not.

The fear of God continued to be a normal part of Christianity until a new type of Gospel rose to the front. The theology of Arminianism became predominant after the Moody and Sankey campaigns in England at the turn of the 20th century (as we have said elsewhere in this paper). As the free-willism of Arminian theology and the practices of Arminians (such as the easy-believism of the invitation system) took hold, more and more people began to believe and teach that God loves everybody. Despite clear Scriptures telling us that this is untrue,²⁰ this emphasis took hold to the point that almost all modern evangelicals now believe it.

The problem with telling people, even hardened, wicked sinners, that God loves them is that it takes away the basis of the fear of God. If a sinner is told that God already loves him, then why should he fear him? Why should he worry about hell? If God loves him then he has no problem.

These same Christians that tell sinners that God loves them also tell believers that they cannot ever stand condemned for anything at all; they are never guilty because they are justified by grace. This is also contradicted by clear Scriptures, which tells us that

²⁰ E.g. Ps 5:6, 11:5.

Christians can be guilty before God and can even be disciplined severely for sin.²¹ How clear must Scripture get; two believers were killed by God for simply lying about how much they gave to charity! Such teachers fail to understand basic theology, such as the new nature being righteous in Christ and the old nature continuing to grow more corrupt in sin (Eph 4:22-24). When I walk in my old nature I am condemned for my sin and must confess it and repent (1 Jn 1:8). It is only those who are in Christ (i.e. in the new nature) that are free from condemnation (There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit; Rm 8:1). Such teachers are antinomians.²²

The point

The fear of God is a vital part of the Christian life. If it is absent there is something seriously wrong.

The modern problem

The fear of God is largely absent, both from individuals and churches. Indeed, many modern churches seek to downplay the glory and terrible majesty of God by making God more amenable, approachable and insipid. Too many approach the Lord Jesus as some mate, having no fear to the point of blasphemy.

Separation from the world

The early church was noteworthy for its clear separation from the world. In those days you were either worldly and safe, or sanctified and in danger of martyrdom. Christians stood out from the world. They did not sacrifice to Caesar, which drew attention, and they did not partake in the fleshly social practices of their neighbours. Just being a true Christian, in those days, meant that you stood out from the crowd.

This attitude continued in the times of the church fathers. Being worldly was considered a grave sin and there were constant warnings against it. Sometimes these drifted into legalism, which wasn't helpful but it showed that entanglement with the world was considered a serious matter. So intense was this desire to be separate from the world that a number of extreme disciplines came into being.

The most radical were the pillar ascetics. These were people who literally lived for years atop a tall pillar and who were fed from baskets on ropes by friends (which also took down waste). The most famous of these was Simon the Stylite (390-459). He began to live on a platform above a 60-foot pillar in 423 at Telanissus and stayed there for 36 years.

Others veered into Gnostic territory and viewed all pleasure as earthly sin; thus they fasted, avoided certain foods, condemned marriage and so on.²³ The Anchorite²⁴ hermits of Egypt, Syria and Celtic Ireland assumed bizarre and extreme forms.²⁵ The hair-shirts and self-flagellation of some ascetics are well known; this continued up to the Reformation;

²¹ Heb 12 for example.

²² 'Against law'; those who teach intemperance without consequence. The view that Christians are released by grace from the obligation of observing the moral law.

²³ The basis of Gnosticism is dualism – that is the Platonic idea that the world of the immaterial spirit is pure but the world of the material earth is evil.

²⁴ Anchorite: a person who becomes a hermit in order to triumph over the flesh by prayer, meditation and mortification. The great fashion for this began in the 4th century. Eventually the Anchorites were developed into the organised monasticism of several orders. Essentially it means a monk who has withdrawn from society. Simon the Stylite and Antony were Anchorites.

²⁵ Some to the point of death (the Circumcellions). Irish monks would stand in a freezing pool naked for hours or days, for example.

indeed Martin Luther was originally an ascetic monk until he realised that damaging his physical flesh did no good to stop sensual fleshly temptations. These all made the mistake of despising the body (as evil) which was actually a gift from God to be used as a steward for good.²⁶

Many adopted the position of ‘world-flight’ or monasticism. This was the mistake of being geographically reclusive to avoid being part of the world. Of course, the world was just as present in monasteries as anywhere else (or even more so – unnatural confines and isolation led many into immorality, greed and debauchery).

Anthony of Egypt (251-356) was not the first monk but was probably the most influential early one. He gave his large fortune away after reading Matthew 19:21 followed by Matthew 6:34. He lived in isolation, including a period in a tomb, and then went further into the desert where he lived in a disused fort for 20 years, until he moved to a mountain near the Red Sea. He was beset by visitors seeking his teaching, and created monastic cells of hermits around Pispir.

Monasticism grew rapidly throughout Europe after the 4th century, initially spreading from Egypt to Syria and Palestine. Jerome’s ascetic writings greatly influenced even the Roman aristocracy and Anchorite ideals took hold in Gaul (France) through Martin of Tours. Celtic Ireland in the 6th century was a noteworthy centre of monastic ideas and this was responsible for bringing the Gospel to parts of Northern England (e.g. Iona,²⁷ Lindisfarne²⁸). Some developed into a brotherhood of monks²⁹ rather than individual ascetics. Rules began to be developed, most notably by Benedict (‘The Rule of Benedict’) and different societies of communal monks were initiated. In the 13th century the Mendicant orders were formed such as the Franciscans (1210), the Dominicans (1216) and the Carmelites (1247). Luther was originally part of the Augustinian order formed in 1256. These all emphasised poverty and the renunciation of all property. Initially they were intended to be self-supporting by work (such as brewing mead in Devon); but in time many became dependent upon begging and support by outsiders.

All these people made the mistake of viewing the sinful world in material terms and identifying it with the body and evil things, instead of the immoral system and cultural ethic that it is. The abandonment of society and civilisation is not avoiding the world’s ethical system, which is a way of thinking.

However, the simple point is that the Christian church in general understood that there was a problem in being corrupted by the world system and viewed poverty as being helpful to spirituality. Charity was considered as godly, even by wicked people. Everyone understood that it was a good thing to give aid to the poor, weak, frail and homeless; giving money away was seen to be more spiritual than getting money. The riches of the Roman Catholic Church were viewed with suspicion, especially as the fringe and more pure groups developed without riches on the Continent (such as the Albigenses and the Waldensians). There is a story that Martin Luther met the pope who showed him the vast riches in the

²⁶ Encratites is the word used to describe extreme ascetic heretical groups.

²⁷ Iona: an island in the Inner Hebrides, the site of a monastery founded by St. Columba [c.563] which became a centre for Celtic Christian missions to Scotland and a place of pilgrimage.

²⁸ Lindisfarne: (or ‘Holy Island’) a small island off the coast of Northumberland, north of the Farne Islands. It is linked to the mainland by a causeway exposed only at low tide. Lindisfarne is the site of a church and monastery founded by St. Aidan (635), a missionary centre of the Celtic Church.

²⁹ Cenobitic monasticism, i.e. ‘common life’. The Greek word *monachos* originally meant ‘celibate or single’.

Vatican and said, ‘*Martin, no longer can the church say, silver and gold have I none.*’³⁰ To which Luther replied, ‘*Neither can it any longer say to a lame man, ‘rise up and walk’.*’³¹

Though it made mistakes in its zeal, the medieval Christian at least understood the value of having little hold on the world. This continued into the Reformation where the best and most godly church leaders knew much about suffering and poverty. Though he could have been rich due to his esteem amongst the Genevan councillors and his royalties from writing, Calvin gave most of his money away; much of it to help suffering pastors and churches in France and refugees in Geneva. He even asked the council, one year, for a reduction in his salary. The pope said that if he could find a hundred men who disdained money like Calvin, he could rule the world. Calvin was so careful about worldliness that he even directed that he be buried in an anonymous grave so that it would not be revered.

We could give many more examples of men who disdained riches, fame, prosperity, comfort and possessions in the Reformation. But this continued in evangelical leaders in the centuries afterwards. Great men made enormous material sacrifices to further the cause of Christ, sometimes living in horrific, arduous circumstances.

Alexander Peden was a true prophet who lived from 1626-1686 in Scotland during the killing times of the Covenanters. Although he was an heir to a great estate, he rather chose a life of suffering to preach the Gospel. After 1660, persecution erupted for Protestants with the accession of Charles II and Peden was evicted from his ministry along with 2000 ministers in England and 400 in Scotland (1662-3). Meetings in Scotland took place in secret (called ‘conventicles’) and were deemed illegal while capital punishment and appalling tortures were ordered for officiating ministers. In those times you could be murdered on the spot by troops for even listening to the Gospel. Peden was a popular preacher at these meetings in Scotland and N. Ireland attracting large crowds. He had many thrilling escapes as he roamed the hills of Galloway and often had to sleep in the open, even in winter, in clefts of a rock or under a tree. His life story is certainly worth reading. This was a man who eschewed the world and understood that suffering was a good thing in Gospel ministry.

This sort of scenario was common amongst the great men that God used in the period up to the 20th century. David Brainerd could have had a comfortable life in America but chose rather to go to preach the Gospel to the Native American Indians. Despite being sickly, he gave his life to them and died at the age of 29 as a result of his severe hardships, such as sleeping in the rain or riding through wind and hail. John Paton was so careful with money that when he came back to England and America to raise money for his South Sea mission he refused to spend any on himself. Instead of booking rooms, in even cheap hotels, he slept under bushes so that he did not waste any of the Lord’s money.

The point

We could go on ad infinitum. Throughout church history up to the mid-20th century the best people in the church, and many amongst the common people, understood that to follow Christ we must not be of the world. Though that may have been taken to extremes by some, it was a key fundamental issue to favour poverty rather than riches; suffering rather than comfort; a little with humility rather than vast possessions; and a simple life rather than fame and fortune.

³⁰ Acts 3:6a.

³¹ Acts 3:6b.

The modern problem

The lessons of history have been unlearned (not just forgotten) and the situation has twisted right around. Modern Christians are being sold the lie that they should experience comfort in this world now. But not only comfort, also riches, prosperity, constant healing, joy, and abundance. Christians who suffer are considered as having a problem with faith while Charismatic leaders who have several Lear jets and limousines are looked up to as having spiritual authority because they are rich.

Success in the world is seen by most as being indicative of the Lord's blessing, whatever its actual value. Thus many false teachers even go so far as to say that the good things in life come from God but the bad things in life come from the devil. These people have clearly never read their Bible (see Isa 45:7; Amos 3:6; Lam 3:32). Such people even fail to acknowledge God's sovereignty over creation and say that bad weather conditions (hurricanes, tsunami etc.) are caused by Satan and God is sad and powerless about it. This is blasphemy; it avers that Satan is stronger than God and in control of God's possessions.

All this is to say nothing about the way that the world has entered the church. In fact, most of the modern churches are nothing but worldly systems from start to finish. Their leadership is worldly; their meetings are worldly; their goals are worldly; their methods are worldly; their strategies are worldly; and the fruit of the ministry is worldly so that few are truly saved.

The modern church situation is world away from the historic church position on being separate from the world.

Hell

The OT testified about the Christ to come and the doctrine of hell was a key feature in that doctrine.³² Though the OT prophets had less clarity than NT apostles, they understood that the wicked would remain in a place of torment but the righteous would be lifted out of the grave.³³

When the Christ came he preached the good news of salvation to those chosen to hear it; but he also preached a great deal about hell and warned the sinners of his day about future punishment. In fact, Jesus spoke about hell more than anyone else in Scripture; therefore it must be a key issue to God.

The message of hell also featured in the ministry of the apostles; sometimes spoken of in very picturesque language in contending against heretics.³⁴

The church fathers continued to preach about hell, explaining that all sin will be paid for in eternal torment to those who refuse to submit to Christ the Lord. During the Dark Ages and the medieval period the Roman Catholic Church at least got this message right. Hell was featured very heavily in Roman teaching and this captured the imagination of artists. Dante wrote one of the first modern forms of allegorical novels in his trilogy, the initial book being about hell.³⁵ While there are many paintings relating to hell, the most graphic, striking and surrealistic has to be that by Hieronymus Bosch [1450–1516], *'The Garden of Earthly Delights'*, which is well known to all. This is a triptych with the vision of hell being

³² Ps 9:17, 31:17; Prov 21:16.

³³ Ps 16:10, 30:3, 49:15.

³⁴ Jude 1:4-16.

³⁵ Dante Alighieri's 14th-century, *'The Inferno'* (Italian for 'hell'); being the first part of *'The Divine Comedy'*, an epic poem. It is followed by *Purgatory* and *Paradise*.

the third panel. Hell must have been a significant medieval subject for the matter to produce two of the best known works of art of all time.

As explained elsewhere, the fear of hell was sufficient to give the Roman church great authority by using the threat of excommunication, which in those days was considered final, ensuring the condemnation of hell.

The teaching about hell continued to be an important topic for Reformation doctrine. It finds a place in all the Reformation and Post-Reformation confessions, catechisms and creeds. In the local church there were many sermons on hell used to apply the message of the Gospel to sinners under wrath. The Puritans too majored on the doctrine of hell, especially in their desire to apply the law to the conscience of awakened sinners considering their future.

The idea of the hell-fire sermon, used as a tool to provoke the consideration of one's place before God and the need to find a saviour to avoid condemnation, was not only normal in Protestant churches after the Reformation, but it continued in the preaching of evangelical leaders right up to the 20th century.

Perhaps the most famous example of this type of preaching is the sermon by Jonathan Edwards, '*Sinners in the hands of an angry God*'. This was preached in Enfield, Connecticut, in July 8, 1741 during 'The Great Awakening'.³⁶ This sermon is the most famous of Edward's many works and its effect was like lightning in America. The power of this sermon is still being studied today. Like many other revival sermons, it taught that God is angry with men now for their sin and at any moment he may cast them, justifiably, into hell where they will suffer an eternal torment in condemnation of those sins. The wrath of God abides on every sinner right now and it is only God's pleasure that currently prevents him from enduring God's wrath in person. The only safe place of protection from hell is in the arms of Christ and only those who accept his Gospel have any hope of eternal life.

Preaching on hell was a common form of proclaiming the Gospel and was used by many great church leaders, but things began to change after the Moody-Sankey campaigns in England. Arminianism had been spreading through various rogue church movements, such as the Holiness Movement in America, which was based on Methodist ideas. DL Moody came to Britain, initially quietly but later with great fanfare and publicity and he brought this Arminian Gospel. The power of his campaigns, which were big news at the time because of the huge crowds, even drew in Calvinists like Spurgeon in his later, weakened state.³⁷ After his death, Spurgeon's wife gave Moody her husband's Bible.

Moody was an ardent Arminian, usually emphasising a free-will Gospel message. In fact, it was whilst preaching in this way in Chicago that John Darby argued with him. Eventually,

³⁶ The Great Awakening [1725–1760] was a period of several revivals in colonial America and to a lesser degree in England. The earliest aspect was the preaching of TJ Frelinghuysen among the Dutch Reformed. This then spread to Presbyterian ministers, such as Gilbert Tennent in New Brunswick. After this Edwards was involved in Northampton, Massachusetts. The most able preacher, however, was Englishman George Whitefield.

³⁷ Spurgeon's Tabernacle was the first place Moody visited in England in 1867 and Moody greatly admired Spurgeon. Despite their opposing theologies, Spurgeon was supportive Moody and allowed him to preach in his church. This has drawn many debates since Spurgeon had long been critical of American revivalists. It seems that Spurgeon liked Moody's compassion for souls and readiness to squash empty traditions to preach the Gospel. Also Moody preached in a way that did not emphasise his Arminianism at first but centred on Christ.

after some exchanges, Darby walked out, in disgust, and severed his relationship with Moody. Many would now consider it odd that Darby broke with Moody over Calvinism.

What was noteworthy to many was the fact that, based on Arminianism, Moody emphasised a love of Christ for everyone and pleaded for their repentance, drawing an emotional picture of Christ's sufferings.³⁸ This was a break from the earlier revivalist emphasis of people like Jonathan Edward's. Mary Slessor, the pioneer missionary, noted in her diary that, having herself got converted through the dour hell-fire Calvinism of Scottish Presbyterians, now having heard Moody, she vowed never to use hell-fire preaching herself.

The Arminianism of campaign evangelists, a new practice in Britain, would continue to push God's love for everyone. Thus RA Torrey followed Moody; Billy Sunday followed Torrey; Billy Graham followed Sunday; Louis Palau followed Graham and so on. Arminianism based on a love of God for all overwhelmed a hell-fire Gospel message.

As Arminianism took hold of UK evangelicalism, the general doctrinal health of the church began to evaporate. Even in the 1940s men like Arthur Pink could bewail the general apostasy of the UK churches and the deplorable state of Biblical understanding. If he were alive today he would not believe his eyes and ears. With the advancement of the Charismatic Movement, the degeneration of doctrine assumed ever-greater depths. The ordinary believer today has little clue about Bible teaching and submits to Sunday sermons that are intended to tickle his fancy, amuse him, bolster the leadership mission or get money from him.

What was a surprise was the apostasy of significant Bible teachers in this downgrade. One of the messages that got lost in the apostasy was teaching upon hell. It not only went out of fashion but it was seen as destructive. No longer were sinners to be challenged, or even threatened with hell, they were to be enticed and comforted and told that God loves them, whatever their sin. Thus Seeker-Sensitive measures took hold on most churches and books by authors such as Bill Hybels and Rick Warren were all the rage. But worse was to come.

Previously evangelical moderate men suddenly decided that hell no longer existed while others also began to teach the long dead doctrine of soul-sleep. None other than John Stott, a previously notable evangelical, began to teach conditional immortality (or annihilationalism).³⁹ Other supporters of this doctrine include: Dr. David R. Reagan, Greg Boyd, Roger Forster, Philip E. Hughes, Michael Green, Stephen Travis, and Clark Pinnock, F.F. Bruce and Edward Fudge.

The point

Throughout history the doctrine of hell has been a firm anchor point of Christian theology. It was even a doctrine that was shared by Protestants and Romanists.

³⁸ Dwight L. Moody's Arminianism is seen in the following: 1) he denied election and preached a god who loves everyone (*'He loves you and gave Himself up for you. Can you give a reason for hating Him?'*). 2) He denied limited atonement and preached a god who desires to save everyone (*'He wants you to come, and if you come you can drink. ... That is what God wants to do. He wants to give you something. ... There isn't any one but He wants him to be free. ... He wants to save you.'*). 3) He denied God's sovereignty and preached a god who pleaded for sinners to respond to him: (*'... you will find that the Son of God, that Jesus is at the very door of your heart knocking for admittance ... That is the Son of God coming to you at the midnight hour, pleading with you to accept Him. ... If you will only accept Him, He will do this for you.'* *For All People*, a compilation of Moody's sermons, 1877.

³⁹ That is, all men pass into nothingness (annihilation) at death and only those who have fulfilled the condition of trusting in Christ are given eternal life.

The modern problem

Very many modern Christians do not believe in the doctrine of hell; those that do downplay it significantly. Many significant church leaders now openly deny hell as eternal punishment. Hardly anyone challenges sinners with their future condemnation, though this was a normal method of evangelising in history and was used by Jesus himself.

The place of Israel

The position of the apostles on Israel was clear and followed the teaching of Jesus. This was that Israel had rejected her own Christ (Messiah) as she had rejected the prophets before him,⁴⁰ had stumbled on the rock of offence,⁴¹ and was in a place of punishment and cursing as predicted by Moses.⁴² The kingdom was taken away from Israel as a nation⁴³ and expanded into a universal kingdom comprising of the elect from all nations.⁴⁴

In missionary practice, it was common to reach out to Jews first since the promises of God had originated with them and the apostles were Jews; some Jews were converted.⁴⁵ However, the majority were enemies of God and soon became the chief persecutors of the church. Those who attacked Christ and his teachings were rebuked in the strongest terms by apostles.⁴⁶

These views were continued in the church fathers. Those fathers who are currently attacked by Jewish Root teachers were only saying what Paul had already said, sometimes almost word for word. Such false teachers criticise the early church theologians but fail to see that they have Paul as a witness for their views.⁴⁷

This position was largely continued up to the Reformation; individual Jews continued to get saved occasionally but the majority were enemies of the church. This is because Judaism after the destruction of the temple in 70 AD became very different from the Judaism of Moses or even of Jews at the time of Christ (Torah Judaism).

After the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple [a judicial act of punishment by God to terminate torah Judaism, which could not continue without an officiating priesthood and a holy place to sacrifice] Pharisaic Jews began to devise a new system of Jewish religious practice. The enemies of Christ developed the Babylonian Talmud, a collection of sayings by rabbis, which the Jewish Encyclopaedia confirms as having a greater authority than the OT.

Modern rabbinic Judaism is nothing like the Judaism of the period of Christ but a perverted new form of false religion. Its falseness is confirmed in its support of vile sins (including paedophilia), its commitment to lying (even on oath), its antagonism to the Christian church and its absolutely foul blasphemous condemnations of Christ. No believer

⁴⁰ Acts 2:36, 5:30, 7:52. Note that the apostles tell ordinary Jews that they crucified the Lord, not just the religious elite.

⁴¹ Rm 9:32; 1 Cor 1:23; 1 Pt 2:8.

⁴² Deut 18:15-19.

⁴³ Matt 21:43.

⁴⁴ Rm 1:16, 10:12; Gal 3:28; Col 3:11.

⁴⁵ Acts 13:14, 14:1, 17:1-2.

⁴⁶ Gal 5:12; Phil 1:2; 1 Thess 2:14-16.

⁴⁷ See my papers, *'The twin problems affecting the early church'*, *'Greek versus Jewish backgrounds to Systematic Theology'*, *'Does God loves Jews especially'*, *'Straightforward Scriptures regarding the current focus on Israel'*, and my book *'The Veil of Moses'*.

can support rabbinic Judaism and fail to earn God's condemnation.⁴⁸ Jewish Root disciples are the victims of demonic deception.

During the Reformation there were periods of toleration for Jews in general (though condemning their religion) but also times of persecution. Thus at one point Luther had advocated treating Jews with gentleness in Germany but after the Peasant's Revolt wrote scathingly about them as a result of the danger they provoked to the national stability. Rabbinic comments clearly demonstrate their potential danger to the stability of society.⁴⁹

One reason why Jews were hated in some countries (in fact they were exiled from several at different times) was that they profited from usury before a banking system had been developed and when lending for profit was forbidden to Christians. Their ability to lie and deceive under oath (permitted and encouraged by the Talmud if against Christians and Muslims) made everyone consider them unsavoury and untrustworthy in society. Most theologians saw all this as merely the fruit of their condemnation by God for the sin of rejecting the Messiah.

After the Reformation their fortunes continued to be mixed. There were times when they were tolerated and welcomed, even by Calvinist Oliver Cromwell, and others when they were in disfavour. Up to the 20th century they continued to be saved individually by believing the Gospel just as Paul said they would in Romans 9-11.

Their situation in the world changed dramatically with the invention of Zionism. Despite being condemned by Ultra-Orthodox Jews to this day,⁵⁰ Zionism triumphed through crafty political manoeuvring and the use of large sums of money from rich Jewish supporters in high political positions in the west.⁵¹ In time, and in great controversy, the State of Israel was founded in 1948 creating a volatile political situation that has not died down to this day. This state was founded upon terrorism, murder and ethnic cleansing,⁵² which also continues to this day. In fact Israel is in defiance of more UN Security Council resolutions

⁴⁸ See my paper, 'What Supporters of the Jewish Root Movement Need To Know About Dispensationalism and Judaism'.

⁴⁹ Note for instance a modern rabbinic work which says, 'If we kill a gentile who has violated one of the seven commandments... there is nothing wrong with the murder ... There is justification for killing babies if it is clear that they will grow up to harm us'. *Torat Ha'Melech*, [or the King's Torah], Rabbi Yitzhak Shapira (2009).

⁵⁰ 'Torah Jews' consider that the existence of the State of Israel before the appearance of the Messiah is an abomination. See also 'Jews Against Zionism' (www.jewsagainstzionism.com).

⁵¹ The establishment of the Jewish State of Israel was the result of political intrigue between mostly Khazar Jews and British and American politicians. This intrigue involved lying to and breaking promises with the local Arab princes who had supported Lawrence of Arabia in the First World War. Even the Rabbis at American Neturei Karta ('Friends of Jerusalem') state, 'The Zionist State of Israel [has] no legitimate right to exist ... The Jews know that the creation of a Jewish state before the coming of the Mesiach (Messiah) is blasphemous and heretic'.

⁵² 'The state of Israel was set up as a result of a very fanatical violent and bloody campaign by the Zionists, involving terrorist bombings, the murder of politicians and the massacre of residents of Palestine. To say that modern Israel is the product of pure terrorism would be no exaggeration. The former Israeli Prime Ministers Menachem Begin and Yitzhak Shamir were both terrorists who fomented murder before Israel was founded as a state. Shamir, leader of the terrorist Lehi group — also known as the Stern Gang — ordered the murder of the British minister of state for the Middle East, Lord Moyne, who was gunned down in Cairo in 1944. In an interview with the Daily Telegraph newspaper in 1998 ... Shamir said that he "would have been happy to kill Lord Moyne himself" (Daily Telegraph, April 18th 1998, p.20). The same gang assassinated the UN representative in the Middle-East, Folke Bernadotte, in 1948. These men literally bombed and murdered their way into office like any other terrorist organisation in the world.' Alan Morrison email forum (Alan is of Jewish extraction).

than any other nation.⁵³ Christians who blindly support Israel, despite her manifest unrighteousness, should consider their position before God.

The widespread proliferation of Dispensationalism since 1830 was responsible for a significant change in the way Christians viewed Israel. A fundamental principle of Dispensationalism is the dichotomy between the church and Israel with the priority being given to Israel. Thus the kingdom of heaven is Jewish and the future expression of it in a supposed millennium is Jewish. The church is merely a stopgap operation until the Jewishness of God's plan is revealed.

Over time the success of Dispensationalism led to Christians giving support to the idea of Jews being in a blessed state by nature; that is Jews according to the flesh are blessed just because they are Jews. This is an odd thing to believe since most modern Jews have little blood relation to Abraham at all, having come from other ethnic sources.⁵⁴

One of the variants of modern Dispensationalism (which is a system that has constantly changed and fragmented due to its internal inconsistency) is the Jewish Root Movement (or Christian Zionism, or Messianic Christianity and other names.) This has taken some principles of Dispensationalism regarding Judaism and made them a central feature of theology. Thus the focus of believers is now centred upon Jews and Israel instead of Christ. There are various extremes of this false movement, some even advocate circumcision and changing names to Jewish equivalents, but the thrust is to centre people upon Judaism and Jews in order to be blessed.⁵⁵ This is the very reason why Paul wrote the Book of Galatians and Hebrews to prevent this sort of deception. Jewish Root followers cannot have read these books (indeed many fail to read the NT in favour of concentrating upon the OT).

The point

Jews have no favour with God any more than any other nation. God is only interested in Christ and those who are in him, the elect. The Gospel is the means God uses to bring the elect out of the world over time. The Gospel includes Jews and every other national type, Jews have no privileges as Jews and only the elect are loved by God. God loves no earthly nation at all; he only loves those in Christ.

The modern problem

Christians who believe that God loves fleshly, national Jews are mistaken and deceived. Those who go further and consider that blessing is found in supporting Jews and the sinful state of Israel are deeply deceived.

⁵³ 63 up to 1992.

⁵⁴ 90% of modern Jews are not Semites, but are of Turko/Mongolian blood. Modern Jews are of two types: Sephardim and Ashkenazim. The Sephardim arose from Spanish Jews who were expelled in the 15th century. In the 1960's they were numbered at about 500,000. The Ashkenazim, which means Khazar Jews, numbered 11 million at this time. The Jewish Encyclopaedia explains that these Jews were Chazars (or Khazars), a people of Turkish origin genetically related to Hun, Uigur and Magyar tribes. The Chazar kingdom was established in Russia before the foundation of the Russian monarchy by the Varangians in 855 AD. This warring tribe converted to Judaism at the end of the 8th century and adopted Jewish forms of life: synagogues, schools, Hebrew letters etc. Eventually the Chazars were conquered by the Russians and the Chazar royal family fled to Spain, but the majority of the people stayed in Russia. Most of modern Jewry is from this stock.

⁵⁵ There is evidence that the Israeli Secret Service is behind misinformation that supports and defends Jewish Root groups. After a lecture in South Africa (with Alan Morrison) on Jewish Root heresies, Stephen Sizer (an Anglican minister) was severely attacked in emails published on the Internet. He traced those mails back to the Israeli secret service.

There is nothing wrong with praying for Jews or for any other national. Neither is there anything wrong with praying for the Gospel to succeed in Israel, or any other nation. What is wrong is directing people to only pray for Israel and to teach that in doing so one is blessed by God because Jews are special.

Gentile Christians who go further and adopt Jewish distinctives, or celebrate Jewish festivals or adopt Jewish customs, terminology and even names, are putting themselves into bondage according to Paul's teaching in Galatians (Gal 2:4, 4:9, 24-25, 5:1). Likewise, churches which call themselves Messianic Churches or Synagogues, comprising only of converted Jews are also wrong, just as creating any homogenous racial church is wrong. The church is to be a mix of the local society: Jew and Greek, young and old, rich and poor, professional and artisan.

The modern focus upon Israel is part of the current apostasy of the church.

Common grace

The New Covenant teaching on grace is that it is the free mercy and resources of God given to the elect as a result of the redemption of Christ. The foundation of grace is undeserved favour and God's favour is only given to the elect and no one else. God hates the reprobate.⁵⁶ Thus the essential principles of grace are: 1) it is directed to the elect alone; 2) it arises from the cross. Heresies attack both these principles.

This teaching on grace was established by the apostles and continued in the sound theologians amongst the early church fathers.

However, changes to the idea of grace began to develop as predestination and election were attacked after the 4th century. Pelagianism⁵⁷ had suggested that man does not need any grace as he can fulfil the moral law by his own willpower [in fact Pelagius' view of grace was man's innate power to do good; free will]. In his denial of original sin, Pelagius taught that man could perfect himself and be free from sin by following Christ's example. Augustine of Hippo [354-430] fought against this and established the doctrines of grace⁵⁸ as the orthodox position.⁵⁹

After the Pelagian controversy compromises began to be sought between unorthodox Pelagianism and Augustinianism, which some considered extreme because of the doctrine of predestination. The first one that we need to consider here is Semi-Pelagianism.

Monks and church leaders sought to reconcile Augustinianism with Pelagianism, such as John of Cassian [d. 433] and Faustus, bishop of Riez [d. 490]. This set the foundation for many future compromises on free grace. It taught that man, though fallen, was not

⁵⁶ The necessary corollary of election is the passing by of the reprobate, those chosen for destruction. "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion." So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy. ... Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens. ... Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honour and another for dishonour? What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory.' (Rm 9:15-18, 21-23)

⁵⁷ Founded by a British Celtic monk called Pelagius who denied total depravity, election and the need for atonement.

⁵⁸ The doctrines of grace are the essence of Calvinism and are summarised as total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace and the perseverance of the saints. They emphasise the sovereignty of God in salvation.

⁵⁹ For detailed information about the fight for the doctrines of grace see my paper, '*The end-time erosion of justification*'.

spiritually dead and has some power to do good but needs grace as well. Man's will co-operates with the Spirit in regeneration and initiates it by free will. Man's decision is supreme and election is denied.

This synergistic system⁶⁰ (the basis of Arminianism) forms the essence of all future synergistic errors, as we shall see. All such systems deny election, total depravity, limited atonement and justification by faith alone.

The church (largely Roman by this time) sought to settle the raging controversies and condemned Semi-Pelagianism. It then established Semi-Augustinianism at the Second Council of Orange (529). This became the foundation of Roman Catholic views on the atonement for the Middle Ages. It proposed that grace comes to all, enabling man to choose God and perform good works necessary for salvation. It also taught the denial of reprobation and affirmed baptismal regeneration. It is a watering down of the doctrines of grace and affirms man's free will to do good, but only after receiving some unexplained form of grace. The separation of Semi-Pelagianism and Semi-Augustinianism is a historical fact, as evidenced in Roman Catholic monastic squabbles, but the doctrinal tenets are somewhat confused and interlocking. Both are Semi-Pelagian but the latter is more moderate. Eventually a general grace was upheld but irresistible grace and predestination were abandoned in favour of a sacramental grace given in baptism. Those who taught irresistible grace in predestination (such as Gottschalk) were persecuted.

The serious problem with these compromises is the denial of the true doctrine of justification by faith since they emphasise forms of works righteousness and, in the case of Rome, affirms the need of the church to dispense justification through formal means (such as baptism).

In the early period of controversies a new sort of grace was posited called 'prevenient grace'.⁶¹ The word prevenient means 'to come before', from Latin *praevenient*- 'coming before', from the verb *praevenire*, from *prae* 'before' + *venire* 'come'. This is distinguished from 'saving grace'. Prevenient grace does not save anyone but is a helpful precursor to men to strengthen their resolve to do good works; thus prevenient grace comes to all men everywhere, but not all men apply it. Note that for prevenient grace to exist there must be a universal atonement. Those who teach this form of grace are, at best, Semi-Augustinian; it is contrary to Calvinism.

Immediately it can be seen that this is a new sort of grace that is not spoken of in Scripture, but was a necessary construct to enable the compromises in theology to take place. Prevenient grace is necessary in most forms of synergistic theology; that is systems which teach the co-operation of God and the sinner in salvation.

In the Middle Ages the Roman doctrine of grace was conceived as mediated through the sacraments and involved a doctrine of human merit. A general grace was infused into the soul enabling the development of human virtues, which were meritorious (gained merit with God) and led to more grace. Thus grace infused spiritual habits of love, faith and hope as opposed to more human virtues of humility, meekness, temperance, chastity etc. which

⁶⁰ Synergism [from the Greek *syn* – 'together' and *ergon* – 'work', hence 'combined work or action'] is the idea that the human will co-operates with God in salvation; as opposed to monergism, [from the Greek *monos* – 'one' or 'single and *ergon* – 'work, hence 'single work or action'] the Biblical belief that God alone is the efficient cause of salvation, the human will cannot contribute; God is sovereign.

⁶¹ Sadly, Augustine had used this term to apply to the Spirit's initial work in saving the elect and 'subsequent or co-operating grace' as his subsequent work in sanctification. These two types of the Spirit's work are correct, but the term 'prevenient' was later misused for something different.

men produce by mere effort. The Scholastics also severed the connection of grace with predestination and election.

Later compromises in the theology of grace and salvation were based upon historic Semi-Pelagianism. Chief of these is Arminianism. Arminianism is Semi-Pelagian; it is not outright Pelagianism teaching that man saves himself unaided, but is a moderated form teaching that man saves himself after some divine assistance (prevenient grace).⁶² Wesleyanism particularly emphasised prevenient grace, as did the Roman Catholic Church.⁶³ The reason for this is to emphasise grace but abandon predestination, a doctrine Wesley hated.

Reformed theology, following Calvin and Augustine, strongly emphasised a single saving grace that comes to the elect alone, adding that natural man has no capacity for good whatsoever and is without grace. This is a restatement of the Biblical position. Often the phrase 'the work of the Holy Spirit', equated to the meaning of 'grace' and 'grace' was often used in connection with justification. The doctrine of God's providence (his provision for the continuance of the earth and life) was separate from the doctrine of grace.

This continued without change in Reformed theology until the mid-19th century.⁶⁴ Thus Calvinists aver that electing grace as given only to some (the elect) and insist that this grace cannot be resisted. Methodists argue that prevenient grace is given to all people and that it can be resisted.⁶⁵ For historic Continental Arminians conversion depends upon the will of man accepting the Gospel; for Evangelical Arminians (Methodists) conversion depends upon submitting to prevenient grace; saving grace then follows.

The arrival of common grace

There had been ideas about a general or common grace since Augustine⁶⁶ (as in prevenient grace) but Calvinists who spoke of common grace (such as Calvin⁶⁷) were usually speaking loosely about the doctrine of providence that had nothing to do with enabling people to believe. God's provision for the good things in the world to sustain life were sometimes spoken of as common grace, but this is not a Biblical manner of speaking. God's providential ordering of the world to sustain the elect is part of his sovereign governance according to his plan. It is not divine favour to reprobates and certainly does not provide the ability for reprobates to do good works.

⁶² To make life complicated there are two forms of Arminianism. The original continental form was closer to Pelagianism, emphasising free will and denying original sin (thus man is able). It also taught a single, universal, sufficient grace (which may be resisted). Evangelical Arminianism, as exemplified in Wesleyanism, affirms the need for prior grace due to original sin as different to saving grace, which follows in those who obey. It was also more orthodox on original sin (hence the need for prevenient grace).

⁶³ For Wesley, prevenient grace could lead a pagan to salvation without hearing the Gospel.

⁶⁴ With the exception of Amyraldism and its offshoots, which I have ignored since it is unbiblical, even though it is adopted by many modern Calvinists. Regarding grace, Amyraut posited a differentiation in the sinner between moral ability and natural ability. That is, man is morally unable to good works but has a natural ability to believe the Gospel. This was taken on board by Americans Jonathan Edwards, Joseph Bellamy and the British Andrew Fuller. The Fullerite system of Amyraldism is now in great favour with American Calvinists, such as John Piper. See my booklet '*Fullerism*'.

⁶⁵ All Methodist theology breaks down at this point if prevenient grace is false (which it is).

⁶⁶ Augustine did not teach common grace but his expositions of grace included forms that were not saving grace, and this led the way for others to develop the idea of prevenient grace that aids belief. Augustine overwhelmingly used the word grace to describe the renewing power of the Spirit to illuminate the mind and change the will. The good works of pagans without grace were merely 'splendid sins' because they did not emanate from faith or consider the glory of God.

⁶⁷ Who used the phrase four times in his works, but two of these referred to saving grace. H Kuiper, p178, quoted in Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, p434.

The term was also used in some confessions to denote the ‘ordinary’ works of the Holy Spirit; those producing ordinary effects rather than salvation. It did not imply that grace was given to all men in common. Thus, for example, the *Westminster Confession* 10.4. So, the appearance of the phrase ‘common grace’ in historic Reformed works does not necessarily imply what moderns mean by the term.

The modern notion of common grace was only developed in the last 100 years. This notion of a common grace is now universal in evangelical circles, having been popularised by compromised Reformed theologians. The reason for this has been to use this doctrine as a support for the equally unorthodox idea of the ‘free offer’ in the Gospel.⁶⁸ The US Presbyterian church circles that adopted the free offer after 1924⁶⁹ introduced common grace to support this. However, the initial introduction of common grace theory was developed by a Reformed theologian who was opposed to the free offer – Abraham Kuyper [1837-1920].⁷⁰

Kuyper was no free offer man but wrote a sterling book in defence of particular grace, which few moderns have read. Kuyper developed his ideas about common grace (or general grace) and accepted that they were novel and not found in Calvin. His point was that this grace enables man to do good works that please God and were a benefit to the church. This denies Scripture which plainly states that natural man can do no good whatsoever (Rm 3:12).

The reason for developing this doctrine was to enable the Dutch Reformed church work with Roman Catholics in a joint venture to create a powerful state church (Erastianism) that would progress in ruling the world. Kuyper was also looking for some theological basis to justify co-operation between sinners and the people of God. He was successful, for a short time, in that he became Prime Minister, but he mistakenly allied the church with the world and used the doctrine of common grace to support his ideals.

The chief principles of Kuyper’s common grace theory are:

1. Common grace enables sinners to do good works and please God. These good works can be used to establish the kingdom of Christ in this world.
2. Common grace restrains sin in society.
3. Common grace enables believers to work hand in hand with sinners to achieve good works for a Christianised society.
4. The Dutch Reformed church, working with a Reformed government, was the true church which would come to dominate the world and lead to a global Christian revival.

In opposition to this we must note the following:

1. Sinners cannot do good works and cannot please God.
2. There is no Biblical mention or description of the idea of common grace. It is a modern invention (by Kuyper).
3. Unbelievers cannot work hand in hand with believers to build the church. The church is a spiritual institution, in Christ, and is a mystery and unknown to the world. Only Christ can build the church using believers of his choice.

⁶⁸ The free offer (or sincere offer or well-meant offer) refers to those Calvinists who water down the doctrines of grace to the point of being Amyraldian. They are sometimes called 4-Point Calvinists. Though they claim to believe the Calvinistic doctrines of grace, they preach that God loves all and that Christ died for all, which contradict election and limited atonement. See my papers, ‘*Thoughts on the Free Offer Debate*’, ‘*The Free Offer Debate (Contra Malcolm Watts)*’.

⁶⁹ The Synod of Kalamazoo.

⁷⁰ Herman Bavinck developed Kuyper’s theology further in his Reformed Dogmatics.

4. No state church is the true church. The history of the Dutch churches shows continual apostasy and fragmentation.
5. Christ's kingdom is not of this earth and will not appear until the Second Coming. There is no materialistic prototype of this kingdom on earth now, apart from the elect church.

Despite Kuyper's opposition to the free offer, his teachings about common grace were latched on to by free offer men to support their position.⁷¹ Thus most modern supposed Calvinists teach an Amyraldian⁷² free offer in the Gospel and support it by equally false teachings on common grace.

The point

The only grace is saving grace. The modern church confuses the idea of common grace with God's providential ordering of the world and his sovereign governing of it (the doctrine of providence). Thus his patience in providing rain and sunshine for men to live is not gracious favour but a part of his plan for the elect. The world continues so that the elect may be born and saved in time. This is not grace to all. Grace only comes from the cross and is only directed to the elect because grace is God's favour towards sinners, and he is only favourable to elect sinners.

The modern problem

The modern church, almost universally, has recently come to accept both the idea of common grace and the free offer that is tied to it. This means that modern Calvinists actually deny the essence of Calvinism – election and limited atonement; plus there is an implied denial of total depravity in that men can do spiritual good, and a denial of irresistible grace in that men choose to be saved by their free will. This enables men to preach a Gospel that God loves everybody and that Christ died for everybody, notions that are totally contradictory to Scripture.

The adoption of common grace leads to supporting the free offer, and this is a total contradiction of Scripture and a denial of Calvinism.

Self-denial

Self-denial was a crucial part of the Lord's instruction for his disciples. In every Gospel, on seven occasions, he explains that a disciple must lose his life; must deny himself every day in order to know the benefits of salvation.

If anyone desires to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. Lk 9:23-24

He himself, the most blessed of men, gave us a model to follow in his continual denial of himself, even to the cross. The Lord constantly lived for his Father and to serve others, rather than pleasing himself and satisfying his personal ambitions.

The apostles followed his example and taught the same message. Paul explained that we must die to ourselves and to the world, that we must put off the old man and put on Christ.

⁷¹ Most noteworthy amongst these were Ned Stonehouse, John Murray and Louis Berkhof. Thus Berkhof's otherwise good systematic theology has a whole chapter on common grace.

⁷² Amyraldism was a corrupted compromise of Calvinism appearing around 1610. It is also called 'Hypothetical Universalism'. Modern theologians have an Amyraldism that is a reconciling of Calvinism and Arminianism. It teaches that God loves everyone and desires to save everyone in his heart but since all will not believe he elects only some for salvation.

In fact the essence of sanctification is a life of repentance, of a changed mind. It is denying ourselves and putting on the new man every day. This is taking up the cross.

The early church fathers continued this message, though some took it to unwise extremes. Ignatius was determined to die as a martyr because he saw that as the high point of self-denial and self-sacrifice. Many others willingly gave their lives to the beasts in the Roman arena or were lit up as torches to light the Appian Way in Rome for Nero's pleasure. But despite the death of thousands in persecution, the church continued to wax strong throughout the empire. Early Southern Britain and Ireland became key strongholds of genuine Christianity, even though this was at the fringe of imperial power.

Although many were theologically misguided during the Dark Ages because they were prevented from having personal copies of the Bible by the Roman Church, nevertheless ordinary Christians were prepared to live self-sacrificially. Though tied to Roman superstition, it was common for people to perform acts of penance for sin and penitence was seen as a virtue. Christianity was equated with humility, self-control and self-sacrifice, except by rich people given to self-indulgence who had no care for their salvation.

During the Reformation self-denial was not only taught but also practised by the reformers. We have mentioned, elsewhere in this paper, about the restraint practised by John Calvin, but this godly attitude was common in sound theologians. In fact, even non-evangelical monks and writers commonly lived modestly and meekly and berated the opulent sins of the Catholic leaders; the Dutch humanist and scholar Desiderius Erasmus [c.1469–1536] was but one of these.

After the Reformation self-denial continued to be seen as an important principle of sanctification. Occasionally sects appeared that practised community of goods and denial of all possessions. The heirs of Franciscan spiritualism formed parachurch sects based on mutual sharing of goods, apostolic poverty and the simple life, such as The Brethren of the Common Life. Indeed, John Wycliffe was in favour of a communistic society. Some groups, such as the radical Hussites (Taborites) sought to force society to change in this direction in the early 1400s until they were violently overthrown. The Hutterite community, began by Jacob Hutter [d. 1536], was established on such principles and some Hutterite groups continue to this day in America; another group was the Diggers in the time of Cromwell.

In modern history there were many experiments in communal society based upon heretical sects that prospered in America; these include the Shakers, and the Pietistic sects the Harmony Society and the Amana Community. There were also many ill-fated Pentecostal communities, which went seriously wrong in the 20th century.

But the point is that, despite the extremes of some, it was considered a key part of Christian living to be simple and live with self-denial. This continued until the late 20th century.

It is safe to say that the majority of Christian groups, and particularly Charismatic churches, deny all this and teach the need for self-fulfilment and self-satisfaction. This affects both the believer's material and immaterial aspects of life.

Regarding the believer's soul, modern Christian psychologists have made it axiomatic that individuals must pursue self-esteem. They claim that a person with low self-esteem cannot function properly and is psychologically disadvantaged. Indeed, most of life's problems are put down to low self-esteem, even when the true cause is simply sin. Book after book by psychologists with a poor understanding of Scripture and doctrine claim that the answer to all the believer's problems are regaining high self-esteem. Thus believers are told that they

need to be comfortable within themselves and feel good about themselves. They must look in a mirror and tell themselves how wonderful they are, and this is supposed to fix their neuroses.

Needless to say all this Freudian mumbo-jumbo is contrary to Scripture and often a denial of the need to confess sin. Frequently the real problem with believers is guilt that has not been cleansed. What is noteworthy is that this trend, based upon the encroaching influence of psychology and psychotherapy on the church in America, has only been active for about 20 years. It is not found in history but is contrary to sound church practice. It is none other than a defence for pride, the original sin of the devil.

The second aspect that has changed is the growing materialism present in the Charismatic church and its doctrine. This is largely due to the influence of Word Faith theology, which is itself a product of the Mind Sciences and New Thought.⁷³ These developed by stealing ideas from false religions, especially Hinduism and occult works. The main conduit for these ideas in the 20th century was the works of Essek William Kenyon, thence his disciple, Kenneth Hagin.⁷⁴

The essence of the claims of Word Faith are the syncretism of Christianity with occult religion. For instance, key elements of this branch of radical Charismania (predictive personal prophecy, shamanism, visualisation, incubating prayer, channelling, inner healing, positive confession etc.) are all applications of sorcery and developed in the American Charismatic church in the latter half of the 20th century.

However, for the mores of the individual Christian, the main problem is the impact of materialism. It is a fundamental teaching of Word Faith, and many Charismatic groups, that the believer is to be victorious in his life and this is interpreted in materialistic terms. The reason for this is that the presentation of the kingdom of God is in materialistic terms also – a plan to actually take over the world (as we have already discussed). Thus the believer must, by his personal faith, learn to claim his own healing, money, desires, riches, prosperity – in fact anything he wants.

This rogue theology actually teaches believers that they can have anything they desire if they have sufficient faith. Thus preachers give messages, seminars, courses, books, DVDs, conferences and so on to pass on the knowledge of how to claim this. Of course, this leads to these preachers getting very rich so they can buy anything they want; some have fleets of aircraft. People are taught to be specific and generate a detailed image in their mind of

73 The Mind Sciences (Religious Science) are those ideas and practices which arose in America in the late 19th century following the discovery of hypnotism (originally Mesmerism), with the corollary of positive thinking techniques and denial of sickness (which is only in the mind) leading to the Metaphysical Healing Mvt. Key in this was PP Quimby [1802-1866] who started healing meetings in New England based upon mesmerism and healed Mary Baker Eddy in 1862. He taught that sickness was only in the mind and initiated what later became 'New Thought', which was a syncretism of Christianity, Gnosticism, the occult, Spiritualism, Platonism, Hinduism and more. Quimby's theology is utterly heretical, denies the atonement, and claims people can become God (mixture of Hinduism and Gnosticism). Other groups jumped on this bandwagon, such as Mary Baker Eddy's Christian Science and Unity School of Christianity. Quimby used occult mind techniques and mystical teachings to influence gullible Christians. Essentially, mind science, visualisation, incubating prayer, mental healing, positive confession etc. are all applications of occult magic – sorcery. New Thought was the brainchild of Methodist minister Warren Evans and Julius Dresser, being a breakaway movement from Christian Science. It is based upon the Platonic, occult and mystical healing ideas of PP Quimby plus some influences from Emmanuel Swedenborg. New Thought ideas permeate some radical Pentecostal/Charismatic and Word Faith teachings.

74 Thus the links are: PP Quimby, New Thought, EW Kenyon, Kenneth Hagin then the modern Word of Faith preachers. But the source is occultic ideas and false religions. It is nothing other than making witchcraft credible.

what they want. This is then to be ‘incubated’ in the mind and outwardly, positively confessed in faith. Such preachers boldly claim, ‘*He has given us power to create wealth*’.⁷⁵

The instrument for gaining what you want is faith. This is presented as a human activity centred in positive confession. It means bringing things into existence by our mouth just like God does. It claims that God is bound by this faith, as a law, and that the believer using faith can command God to do what he wants. Part of this doctrine is the idea that man is a real part of God and faith-speaking Christians are ‘little gods’.⁷⁶ All this is blasphemy, plain and simple; it is very similar to occult shamanism, just like the credible witchcraft of Quimby.

The vision for church leaders following this nonsense is that they can have very large churches. Thus strategies for growth are developed based upon materialistic principles coupled with occult theology. For instance there is often a focus upon demons in an area being the problem to lack of growth; thus these have to be identified, named and fought against through various means, such as Praise Marches. Once the demons are overthrown, growth is automatic (so they claim); in fact Praise Marches in the UK have seen a deterioration in church numbers. It is shocking to see quite academic church leaders fall for this superstitious nonsense. Such is the folly of Charismania.

However, the point is that Christians have been deluded into focusing upon satisfying their demands and needs instead of accepting the principle of self-denial and self-sacrifice. Living in contentment with what we have is insufficient, we must get all we want to show that we are victorious in faith.

Of course, the reality is that most people fail to get what they want and waste what they have spending it on the false prophets. It is tragic to see working class people with sick children spend all they have taking them to Charismatic conventions and supporting Charismatic charlatan preachers, only to find that their child does not recover. They are then told that the reason is their lack of faith. This is a great wickedness.

The point

Through church history the principle of personal self-denial has been paramount in sanctification. No one has denied this except blatant heretics.

The modern problem

Far from self-denial and self-sacrifice being a virtue, most Charismatics see it as a sign of failure. Instead they are taught, by outright charlatans, that, as little gods with creative powers, they can ask for anything they want. This is a theology of greed.

Church Practices

House churches

Needless to say that apostolic churches were house-churches; and this continued for the next couple of centuries, in the main.⁷⁷ As persecution died down people could meet more openly but this really only occurred after the Edict of Milan in 313 when Constantine

⁷⁵ Robert Tilton, pastor of the Word of Faith World Outreach Centre in Dallas, Texas. Quoted from *The Dict. of Pentecostal & Charismatic Movements*, Zondervan, p719.

⁷⁶ E.g. ‘*Until we comprehend that we are little gods and we being to act like little gods, we cannot manifest the kingdom of God.*’ Earl Paulk (Atlanta). ‘*You don’t have a god in you. You are one.*’ Kenneth Copeland. Quoted from *The Dict. of Pentecostal & Charismatic Movements*, Zondervan, p719.

⁷⁷ Sometimes meetings were in woods, caves and catacombs.

declared that Christianity had full legal toleration. This is when the trend for meeting in the local basilica⁷⁸ led to a fashion of architecture for church buildings. Thus the beginning of using public buildings for church meetings was a worldly compromise during a period of degeneration into fleshly worldliness.⁷⁹

From this point onwards the trend to use large public buildings for church meetings developed at the same time that Romanism and the papacy grew up; so that the two were associated. Many local churches continued to thrive outside of Romanism and these met in houses. However, increasingly these came under suspicion from the papacy and eventually this led to outright persecution.

Consequently, the groups which met in houses (seeking to hold a more Biblically pure worship than found in Roman churches) began to be persecuted and their history re-written by the victor. Thus the groups that were closed down were called heretics and sectarians and many histories continue to repeat this. However, more careful study has shown that many of these groups were evangelical, meeting in primitive ways like the apostles. Certainly some groups were unorthodox but many were not. These groups have many names, Paulicans, Bogomils, Cathari, Waldensians, United Brethren and so on.⁸⁰

So, after the apostles, there were groups who continued to meet in homes right up to the Reformation and beyond.

During the Reformation churches that met in homes tended to be lumped with the Anabaptists and persecuted by Romanists and reformers alike. But the Anabaptists can be distinguished into five separate types. Certainly some were unorthodox but others were very godly evangelicals whose behaviour was superior to the Reformers. For instance, the Anabaptists understood the principle of the separation of the church from the state, which the magisterial reformers failed to understand, and they were also credobaptists.

Sadly, radical extremists - such as those violent, charlatan, self-styled prophets who took over the town of Munster - led to a tarring of all Anabaptists with the same brush out of fear for general anarchy.

After the Reformation many people continued to meet in homes, especially during times of persecution. As new movements developed they met in homes until they could build small local chapels for meeting, as many rural homes were too small to seat many people. These chapels, now largely refurbished into private homes, can be seen to only hold small numbers. The building of small chapels continued until late Victorian times when large churches began to be desirable. The word 'chapel' actually means a small church, usually attached to a private building such as a house.⁸¹ Nonconformists met in chapels in small

⁷⁸ Originally, a large meeting hall used by the Romans for public business; a town hall. Such halls were often rectangular in shape, with long colonnades dividing the interior into a central 'nave' flanked by an 'aisle' on each side. The name 'basilica' was adopted for early Christian churches that imitated this arrangement. [Oxford Dict.]

⁷⁹ Constantine made Christianity fashionable and people suddenly needed to say that they were 'Christians' to gain imperial favour. In this period the church was flooded with superficial believers and the rot set in for institutional churches.

⁸⁰ The history of these groups can be found in EH Broadbent's book, *The Pilgrim Church*.

⁸¹ A classic example is 'the Blue Idol' Quaker meeting house in Coolham, West Sussex (near Thakeham), established by William Penn. Many local Quakers sailed to America on the ship 'Welcome' with Penn in 1682 after a meeting here. The early 1600s wooden chapel is in perfect condition, still attached to a timber frame farmhouse built around 1580. It is now used for Quaker services (it used to be a teashop when I visited it years ago) while the main house is used as a private residence. The name 'Blue Idol' probably derives from 'blue idle' when the building was blue-washed and left empty for some years. See <http://www.blueidol.org/>

numbers while compromised Christians went to large Anglican churches. Large churches for nonconformists (such as Spurgeon's Metropolitan Tabernacle) were extremely unusual.

During times of persecution even isolated rural chapels were too obvious a target and believers met in isolated farm houses, barns, caves, and in the open air. In the killing times in Scotland, the Covenanter Christians met in such fashion for decades.

House churches continued to be used right up to the present times, usually when a movement was beginning and had no place to rent. Plymouth Brethren churches mostly met in houses, and later in small halls or chapels, and have only recently virtually died out.

So there is a testimony of believers meeting in houses since the beginning of the church and these were usually the province of dissenters seeking a more pure form of church worship, trying to avoid the compromises of larger institutions. Such is the case today.

The point

There have been believers meeting in houses from the Day of Pentecost and throughout church history. These have tended to be dissenters who desired a purer form of worship than that found in the contemporary institutional churches, or they were forced into this as a result of persecution. The Biblical precedent is to meet in a home as a small community of believers.

The modern problem

Most modern churches not only utilise a relatively large building, but they gather large numbers of believers together from a wide area (or try to). This causes several problems. The first is that is unbiblical and a waste of God's money, which was never meant to be used for bricks and mortar. Second, all the Biblical principles regarding church fellowship and ministry break down when the meeting is too large (such as interdependency, mutual edification, one-anothering, every member ministry, *koinonia* etc). Thirdly, Biblical principles of growth are thwarted, which are to form small churches that split when they reach a certain number, thus planting many small churches in a region. Instead modern churches gather large numbers from a region; the very opposite strategy to that taught by God.

A fellowship meal before the Lord's Supper every week

A good case can be made for the local church having a communal meal before its spiritual service starts. Indeed, spiritual fellowship follows on from social fellowship, which sets the right atmosphere for mutual edification.

Now this has a good Scriptural precedent. The beginning of the institution of the Lord's Supper was the Last Supper held by Jesus just before his death, and this occasion was clearly a Passover meal involving bread, wine, herbs and roast lamb. As the feasting ended, so the Lord instituted the Lord's Supper involving bread and wine as symbols of the New Covenant in his blood. He told us to '**do this in remembrance of Me**' (Lk 22:19).

Also we see the Corinthian church in 1 Corinthians 11 having a fellowship meal before the breaking of bread. The fact that they abused this is no reason to ignore Jesus' command. Acts 20:7 also shows us that the Lord's Supper was central to a Sunday meeting every

week. Jude 1:12 shows us that even at the beginning love feasts were abused by some.⁸² No academic scholar denies any of this.⁸³

In the early church all local congregations practised what was called ‘the agape feast’,⁸⁴ which was a communal meal meant to encourage fellowship. The point was that the rich could bring sufficient food to help the poor and so all were fed and all were equal. Even secular historians noted this feature of Christian worship.⁸⁵

When the church became tied to the state under Emperor Constantine, and thus became worldly, the practice of the agape fell into disuse or was abandoned in many places. However, it continued in some strong groups and is mentioned by the church fathers, Tertullian, Ignatius of Antioch, Clement of Alexandria and Hippolytus of Rome.⁸⁶ By the death of Cyprian [258] the practice was virtually finished, at the same time as a number of other degenerative practices and doctrines had emerged (such as the monarchical bishop under Cyprian). As many apostolic precedents were corrupted, so the agape vanished.⁸⁷ Augustine of Hippo [354-430] tells us that the practice was forbidden in Milan even before his time there.⁸⁸

Along with other compromises in the churches, many abused the fellowship meal (e.g. by getting drunk) and so the Council of Laodicea forbade the celebrating the Agape in 363-

⁸² ‘These are spots in your love feasts, while they feast with you without fear’. [‘Love feasts’ = *agapais*.]

⁸³ *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia* on agape: ‘In the opinion of the great majority of scholars, the agape was a meal at which not only bread and wine, but all kinds of viands [meats] were used, a meal which had the double purpose of satisfying hunger and thirst and giving expression to the sense of Christian brotherhood.. At the end of this feast, bread and wine were taken according to the Lord’s command, and after thanksgiving to God were eaten and drunk in remembrance of Christ, and as a special means of communion with the Lord Himself and through Him with one another. The agape was thus related to the Eucharist as Christ’s last Passover [was] to the Christian rite which he grafted upon it. It preceded and led up to the Eucharist, and was quite distinct from it.’ [vol. 1, p. 66]

⁸⁴ Literally it was called ‘the agape’, the Greek word for love, since it was a setting for the expression of love to all in giving materially.

⁸⁵ Pliny mentions this, though he had not witnessed it himself, but he separates the meal from the worship meetings. Letter around 111 or 112 AD: Gaius Plinius to the Emperor Trajan; Lib. X, 96: C. Plinius Traiano Imperatori.

⁸⁶ *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia* on the separation of the agape and Eucharist, and the eventual cancellation of the agape: ‘In the *Didache* (ca. A.D. 100) there is no sign as yet of any separation. The direction that the second Eucharistic prayer should be offered “after being filled” appears to imply that a regular meal had immediately preceded the observance of the sacrament. In the Ignatian epistles (ca. A.D. 110), the Lord’s Supper and the agape are still found in combination... When we come to Justin Martyr (ca. A.D. 150), we find that in his account of church worship he does not mention the agape at all, but speaks of the Eucharist as following a service which consisted of the reading of Scripture, prayers, and exhortation. Tertullian (ca. A.D. 200) testifies to the continued existence of the agape, but shows clearly that in the church of the West, the Eucharist was no longer associated with it. In the East, the connection appears to have been longer maintained, but by and by the severance became universal; and though the agape continued for a long time to maintain itself as a social function of the Church, it gradually passed out of existence.’ [Vol. 1, p. 66]

⁸⁷ In reference to Clement of Alexandria, [*Stromata* III,2], church historian Philip Schaff says, ‘The early disappearance of the Christian *agapæ* may probably be attributed to the terrible abuse of the word here referred to, by the licentious Carpocratians. The genuine *agapæ* were of apostolic origin (2 Pet. ii. 13; Jude 12), but were often abused by hypocrites, even under the apostolic eye (1 Corinthians 11:21). In the Gallican Church, a survival or relic of these feasts of charity is seen in the *pain béni*; and, in the Eastern Orthodox Church in the *αντιδωρον* (*antidoron*) or *eulogiæ*, also known as *prosphora* distributed to non-communicants at the close of the Divine Liturgy (Eucharist), from the loaf out of which the Lamb (Host) and other portions have been cut during the Liturgy of Preparation’ [*Elucidations*].

⁸⁸ *Confessions*, 6.2.2.

364.⁸⁹ The emerging Roman Catholic Church under the papacy meant that worship was formalised according to papal law, which did not include the agape.

As with other Biblical features of the church, isolated communal house groups continued to have a fellowship meal associated with the Eucharist up to modern times. Some Post-Reformation German Brethren groups and many Pietists practised it (e.g. the Moravians) and these influenced John Wesley who adopted the agape to some degree in Methodism.

Since the mainstream evangelical denominations did not practice love feasts (with the exception of some Anglican churches) there is little documentation in later history, but it seems clear from other literature that some groups which began by meeting in houses (such as the Brethren) celebrated the agape occasionally.

However, in the proliferation of house groups which began in the early 1970s, a number of local churches began to associate the church meeting with a communal meal; some before some afterwards. Even some Elim churches did this (such as the Brighton Elim Church before it closed in the mid-90s; they did this once a month). So, many house churches throughout the country had a form of agape until these were absorbed into the Restoration 'New Churches' in the 1980s and then the practice died out again having no place in a large formal meeting.

Recently a new wave of house churches have appeared, particularly in America, though these vary enormously and many are unorthodox. However, it is now common amongst these to have a communal meal before the Lord's Supper. One group⁹⁰, however, err in joining the two and treating the Supper with disrespect, making it a social opportunity rather than a memorial for Christ's death. This must be condemned.

The point

There are good Biblical and historical grounds for having a fellowship meal before celebrating the Lord's Supper in a home. The fact that this has sometimes been abused in history is no reason to avoid a Biblical precedent. Worship has also often been abused but no one suggests that this should cease.

The modern problem

Since modern churches are often big institutions meeting formally in large buildings, it is usually impossible for them to even consider this; in fact, many do not celebrate the Lord's Supper at all due to pragmatic problems. Thus most modern churches are not compliant with God's word on a foundational point for meeting.

Catechising

Until very recently all churches practised some form of catechising; that is, teaching individuals the basics of doctrine by using a simple programme of question and answer format instruction. Anglicans still have a residue of this in their confirmation classes.

In history all sound Reformed churches practised this, even those who produced few systematic dogmatics (i.e. Reformed Baptists). Baptists, Congregationalists, Presbyterians and Calvinistic Methodists all had their own forms of catechism. Many individual pastors wrote their own catechism specifically for their own church needs (Benjamin Keach, Martin Luther, CH Spurgeon and John Owen for example). No one then thought it sane to ignore the basic doctrinal instruction of new converts.

⁸⁹ *The Encyclopaedia of Early Christianity*: 'Eventually, abuses, coupled with imperial rescripts forbidding the meals of secret societies, brought about the separation of the fraternal meal (agape) and Eucharist.'

⁹⁰ The New Testament Restoration Foundation; mostly in the USA.

This was based upon the apostolic practice of teaching new disciples the importance of sound doctrine. Paul tells us that he did this from house to house in Ephesus, and this is often the way that pastors performed catechising in the past. The most noteworthy case of this was the household catechising of Richard Baxter which, on its own, transformed the morality of the Midlands market town of Kidderminster.

In the 20th century an aversion to catechising developed since some teachers claimed that it was divisive. The idea caught on and, of course, it meant a lot less work for pastors to do. Ironically, in the period when pastor's salaries increased significantly, their workload was diminished. Obviously, failing to catechise simply meant, in practice, that instead of a disciple being dogmatic on certain issues (and thus possibly sectarian) disciples who were not catechised just became ignorant of the truth and susceptible to every wind of doctrine that they caught from elsewhere. The vacuum created by the failure to instruct simply meant that the young disciples filled this vacuum with anything at all.

This same period was the one where an ever-increasing amount of material and media suddenly became available for the first time in history. First there were the new publishing houses bringing out many more religious books than previously. Then there was the invention of the paperback, which made millions of books cheap. Then there were the religious radio broadcasts, which put over the message of many dubious teachers worldwide. Then there was the availability of television programmes. Then there were the inventions of the audiocassette and the videocassette making it possible to gain teaching videos from all over the globe and play the sermon in your front room. Then, greatest of all, was the invention of the Internet, which made almost anything available to almost anybody almost anywhere.

In this period of the multiplicity of resources, most from very dangerous sources, catechising ceased and disciples were left to fend for themselves absorbing all sorts of doctrinal rubbish from the latest paperback or download. What would have been an isolated and local dangerous phenomenon a century ago became available in everyone's front room today.

For example, the Lakeland 'Revival' under the arch heretic and false prophet Todd Bentley was not spread through him travelling the globe, nor through books he wrote, but by television programmes broadcast on U-Tube. I know of sad and unwise, but sincere, people who would avidly watch Bentley's antics night after night absorbing pure evil.

The last hundred years has seen the proliferation of bad teaching in various forms of media thrown at unsuspecting young converts, who just lapped them up because they had no prior instruction to show them these things were dangerous to their spiritual health.

If people are not properly catechised, they will certainly fall into myriad deceits. And this is what happened to the church in the last hundred years and it is why we are in the mess we are in today.

The best church practice, following apostolic precedent, has always been to thoroughly catechise new converts. It is hard and long work but its fruits are incalculable. This has now ceased in the main.

The point

All sound historical churches took care to catechise young believers in basic doctrine.

The modern problem

Virtually no modern church bothers to catechise or even to give any prolonged doctrinal instruction of any sort. Instead prior agendas are followed and sermons tend to boost the current mission statement and strategy. Consequently, believers in modern churches are hopelessly confused on doctrine, to the point that few understand what the Gospel is.

Musical instruments

Sound Reformed evangelicals have only recently begun to adopt instrumental music in their church services. It was only after the effect of the Moody and Sankey campaigns, which made a strong feature of Ira Sankey's singing, that music began to be more developed in UK churches.⁹¹ At the time of these campaigns, CH Spurgeon was preaching in the Metropolitan Tabernacle to hundreds every week without any form of instrumental music at all; he was following the tradition of Puritans and other Reformed leaders in eschewing instrumental music (not singing).

The church had no instrumental music in the beginning, which is why there is not a single NT reference to it in church. It was a couple of hundred years before instruments began to appear in fringe churches, and these were roundly condemned by church leaders. This encroachment of music occurred at the same time as a number of other aspects of degeneration in church practice and Biblical exposition. The reason for the condemnation of church leaders was the association of music with heathen forms and worldly excitement.

Musical instruments were not used [since] the pipe, tabret, and harp here associate so intimately with the sensual heathen cults as well as with the wild revelries and shameless performances of the degenerate theatre and circus. [Augustine 354 A.D]

God hates the worship paid with kettledrums, with lyres, with harps, and other instruments? [John Chrysostom: *Adversus Judaeos*, Homily I, VII:2]

By the 700s more churches were using an organ to lead the singing; but even in 1250 Thomas Aquinas stated that, *'the church does not use musical instruments to praise God ... pipes are not to be used for teaching, nor any artificial instruments, as the harp, or the like'*.⁹²

Though Roman churches began to adopt instruments after 1250, the Reformers strictly avoided them. Both Calvin and Luther condemned the use of musical instruments in church.

Musical instruments in celebrating the praises of God would be no more suitable than the burning of incense, the lighting of lamps, and the restoration of the other shadows of the law. [John Calvin, *Commentary on Psalm 33*]

The organ in the worship is the insignia of Baal... The Roman Catholics borrowed it from the Jews. [Martin Luther, McClintock & Strong's *Encyclopedia*, Volume VI, p 762]

This was confirmed in later church documents, such as the following,

Presbyterians have long considered organ music to be *'an abomination'* (*Glasgow Prebytery*) or a *'corruption'* (*General Assembly of the Church of Scotland*, 1644).

It was only in the 18th century that instruments began to appear in some Protestant churches, though most Reformed churches still avoided them.

⁹¹ It is hard to imagine now the enormous effect of Sankey's singing, which spread much further than the churches. Most Victorian homes would have a copy of the sheet music of 'Sankey's Solos' on their piano in the front room.

⁹² Thomas Aquinas in Bingham's *Antiquities*, Vol. 3, page 137.

Philip Schaff (German Reformed Church, 1819-1893): The custom of organ accompaniment did not become general among Protestants until the eighteenth century. [*The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia*, (1953) Vol 10, p257]

Even Arminian leaders refused to use instruments, such as Adam Clarke and John Wesley: [Should musical instruments] be used in Christian worship? No; the whole spirit, soul, and genius of the Christian religion are against this; and those who know the Church of God best, and what constitutes its genuine spiritual state, know that these things have been introduced as a substitute for the life and power of religion; and that where they prevail most, there is least of the power of Christianity. ... to no such worship are these instruments friendly. [Clarke's *Commentary on the Bible*, Vol. II, pp. 690-691.]

However, with the advent of cheaper and more portable instruments, such as pianos and pedal organs in the 19th century, more churches began to use musical instruments. The Salvation Army made this the actual focus of their ministry. But it was the huge emotional content of the Moody-Sankey UK campaigns after 1873 that the power of instrumental music to accompany singing was seen as a necessity for most churches.

Since that time we have seen the steady growth of multiple instruments in churches. From the single piano or small organ of the mid-20th century, we now have small orchestras or, more often, loud rock bands complete with drums and amplification. Indeed, even supposed Calvinist churches regard a good rock band as a necessity to drive emotional worship these days.⁹³

Thus musical instruments have had a major influence in the growing fleshly, emotionalism and superficiality of church worship, just as the early church fathers said they would.

The point

Sound evangelical churches in history did not use musical instruments until fairly recently.

The modern problem

Most evangelical churches today not only use multiple musical instruments but they dominate church services and are very loud. This leads to fleshly emotionalism and, in the worst cases, overt mysticism. It also leans very heavily upon worldly ideas.

The mode of baptism

One can make an extremely good case for pouring being the mode of baptism used by the apostles, but this is not the place to develop that argument in detail.⁹⁴ I will just give one example.

Modern Baptists are fond of quoting the ‘much water’ at Aenon in Jn 3:22-34, which must imply immersion; so they say. In fact Jn 3:23 is usually wrongly translated; ‘much water’ should be ‘many waters’ (*Young’s Literal*). John baptised at Aenon because there were many springs of water available, which may not have been very deep. In fact, ‘Aenon’ itself means springs or fountains. The water available for baptism was springs, not large rivers. There was no place for immersion in these springs trickling through marshy meadows. It is supposed that John left the Jordan river, which was dirty and muddy overflowing its banks at this time of year (Jos 3:15) for the cool springs to obtain the necessary clean water for baptism found at Aenon. This passage also links ‘baptism’ with ‘purification’ and the law regarding purification was by sprinkling (Lev 14:6-7; Num 8:7; Ps 51:7 etc.).

⁹³ Such as the New Calvinism in the USA as championed by John Piper, Mark Driscoll, John MacArthur et al.

⁹⁴ See my paper, ‘*What about water baptism*’ for more information.

Neither does the word 'baptism' definitely mean immersion, or dipping followed by rising. In fact the best modern linguistic studies have shown that the Greek word meant to change the nature of a thing by this action. Thus ships that sank were baptised (they did not rise again); iron was tempered (changed) by being baptised in fire; a person was baptised by consuming too much wine or opium; wine was baptised by having water poured into it and people were baptised when they suffered persecution or could not cross a river. In any case the chief Biblical association is with the change that salvation makes to a person and this is overwhelmingly pictured as a pouring or sprinkling by the Holy Spirit.⁹⁵

I will cease further development of this point. However, historical studies have shown (even those by Presbyterian scholars)⁹⁶ that baptism by immersion was common in the very early church.

Regarding paedobaptism, infant baptism was not commonplace until the late 3rd century, mostly in North Africa, developing into a widespread custom in the 4th century.⁹⁷ So Presbyterians cannot claim early church provenance for their practice and neither can they prove it from Scripture.

However, as the church developed, baptism by pouring or sprinkling became the common form. Often this was demanded by the actual circumstances of those that had no river, lake or sea nearby; to say nothing about immersing the old, frail, sick and dying. Those who insist on immersion should seriously consider their refusal to baptise a dying, sick or old person because they cannot endure it. Only a very few marginalised groups in church history practised immersion following the first few centuries.

After the Reformation when the Christian church fragmented into numerous sects (some good some bad) almost all of them baptised by pouring. The vast majority in the UK were Anglicans and these were baptised by pouring, as did Presbyterians and Congregationalists.⁹⁸ The only people who immersed converts during the Reformation were some Anabaptists (not all, or not even the majority).⁹⁹

Thus for over a hundred years in Post-Reformation Britain, no one baptised by immersion. When the Baptists began to plant churches in England (in the early 1630s) they too did not immerse at the beginning. They differed from the mainstream churches in being credobaptists but they did not practice immersion until 1640.

So apart from some evidence of immersion in the very earliest days of the Celtic church in England (and records here are sketchy at best), virtually no one was immersed in Protestant denominations until 1640; certainly immersion was not commonplace. So, baptism by immersion has only been known for less than 400 years in the UK.

⁹⁵ The understanding of baptism arose from the Mosaic Law; however, this law never mentioned immersion but always pouring or sprinkling. See the descriptions of the Spirit's work in Acts 2:17, 11:15; 1 Pt 1:2; Isa 32:15, 52:15; Ezek 36:25 etc.

⁹⁶ Such as Stander and Louw.

⁹⁷ Stander & Louw, *Baptism in the Early Church*, p184.

⁹⁸ 'Dipping of the person into the water is not necessary; but baptism is rightly administered by pouring or sprinkling water upon the person.' *Savoy Declaration*, 29.7.

⁹⁹ Some church historians (usually Presbyterians) claim that most, or even all, the Anabaptists practised pouring, or even a Baptist such as Dr. WH Whitsitt. [*A question in Baptist history: whether the Anabaptists in England practiced immersion before the year 1641?* He was the third president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, KY, from 1895 to 1899]

But after 1640 immersion was still only practised by a very small proportion of the Christians in the country. The vast majority of Anglicans, Congregationalists, Presbyterians, Methodists and dissenters used pouring or sprinkling. This continued until the number of Baptists significantly increased in the 18th -19th centuries. In the later 19th century Baptists had some of the largest churches, such as Spurgeon's tabernacle in London, and these popularised immersion. Spurgeon, a hugely influential writer at that time, wrote a pamphlet on the matter telling us that he had no doubt that baptism was by immersion. This had a powerful impact upon the whole church.

Another ingredient was the creation of the Brethren movement in the early 1800s and these too demanded that baptism was by immersion. The Brethren influenced the emerging US Pentecostals in the early 20th century and these became immersionists, even though they had been chiefly influenced by Wesley's Methodism, which did not immerse.

As the 20th century developed it gradually became almost axiomatic that UK evangelicals immersed and allowed nothing else. Regional associations, such as the FIEC, practised immersion, along with all Baptists, Brethren and some non-conformists. By the late 20th century, most evangelicals were immersionists, with the exception of Anglicans, a few Presbyterians and a few non-conformists. By this time Methodism and the United Reformed Church (the amalgamation of earlier Presbyterians and Congregationalists) had virtually ceased to be evangelical.

As the Charismatic Movement got going in the mid-60s, it followed the example of the Pentecostals, the Baptists and the Brethren, and thus most of the Charismatic Movement, and the churches spawned by it, were immersionists.

The point

Today we have the situation where the majority of evangelical UK Christians are immersionists who condemn pouring, and yet the historical record shows the reverse to be common practice. Thus it is only in the last 100-150 years that immersion has been dominant.

The modern problem

The majority of current evangelicals appear to believe that baptism by immersion is axiomatic and all other forms are unbiblical. This puts some believers and churches into great difficulties. The old, sick and frail cannot be immersed and this leads to these vulnerable people not being baptised at all. Which is the greater sin? But many immersionist churches also have problems in that they have no place to baptise people satisfactorily. Even those near lakes and the sea cannot often perform baptisms in this country, as they are so cold, even in summer (most rivers in this country are too dangerous). Frequently, the situation arises where an evangelical church borrows a local church building that has a baptistery, even if this church is one that teaches unorthodox doctrine and practice. Such alliances are unwise.

All of this works against the Biblical teaching that baptism should be performed for a genuine convert as soon as practically possible. In the book of Acts converts were baptised on the same day as their conversion with no wasting of time. This is rarely the practice today.

Conclusion

We must draw a line at this point or this paper will become a tome. The simple point has been to show that there has been a significant shift in the last 100-150 years in the church. In this period there has not only been a degeneration of doctrinal understanding, nor just an erosion of sound Biblical practice but there has been a reversal of many traditional historic church doctrines and practices. From the late 19th century to the present there has been a gradual reversal of what was considered sound throughout church history.

Modern Christians are not just ignorant about the Bible, so that they fall swiftly into demonic deceptions, but they are badly informed about church history. Errors that are embraced by the modern church were fought against in history by many brave men, and their stories ought to be well known. By failing to have any knowledge about what godly men fought for in the past, modern folk have allowed themselves to be hoodwinked into believing lies.

Years ago men literally gave blood to fight a certain error and the evangelical church fought tooth and nail to preserve the truth on this or that point. Wars were fought to contend for the truth and preserve it for future generations. Even children chose martyrdom rather than attend mass. Folk today just cast these battles off as nothing and fall headlong into satanic lies, acting as if these historic struggles never happened. The lack of knowledge about church history is a serious failing of the modern church and a failure to observe the sovereignty of God acting in history to preserve the truth.

Most godly, sound, evangelical believers throughout history held to the following:

- They feared God.
- They practised self-denial.
- They were separate from the world and many were deliberately poor.
- They were creationists who believed in a young earth developed by catastrophism.
- They were mostly Calvinistic in theology.
- They were mostly amillennialists in eschatology.
- They believed in hell as eternal torment and preached a hell-fire Gospel.
- They did not believe in common grace.
- They were not materialistic in thinking.
- They were not Charismatic.
- They did not expect a future global revival where the church ruled the earth (a few were more traditional postmillennialists who expected the church to grow stronger by Gospel success).
- Almost all used a catechism to instruct young believers.
- Almost all had no musical instruments in their church worship.
- None considered that it was necessary to support Jews in order to be blessed and the State of Israel did not exist.

There were differences in church polity and baptism, but all could agree on the fundamentals. Note also:

- Uniformitarianism and Evolutionary Theory did not formally exist until the mid-19th century.
- Dispensationalism did not exist until 1830.
- Jewish Root theology did not exist until the late 1980s (there was a primitive version called Ebionism which was condemned by the church fathers and soon died out).
- The idea of Common Grace did not exist until the late-19th century.

- Arminianism (as we know it today) did not exist until around 1600.
- Charismatic theology did not exist until the early-20th century in the formation of Pentecostalism. The actual Charismatic Movement did not begin until 1960. The only local expressions of Charismatic-type mysticism in history were heretical extremists.
- The modern form of prosperity theology (health and wealth 'gospel') did not arise until the late-20th century in evangelical churches, though there were precursors in heretical sects in the 19th century.
- Very large churches, numbering thousands, did not exist until the mid-19th century.
- The gross modern types of worldliness in evangelical churches did not arise until the late 20th century 9. [E.g. slovenly dress, immodest female dresses, rock bands, dancing.]
- The structuring of the church around the world (e.g. Seeker-sensitive models) did not arise until the late-20th century.
- The denial of hell amongst senior evangelicals did not occur until the late-20th century.
- Catechising did not cease in general practice until the mid-20th century.
- The widespread use of musical instruments did not arise, in general, until the mid-19th century in Reformed churches. Anglicans and Romanists had organs and choirs before that time. Electrified instruments and full bands did not appear in evangelical churches until after 1980.
- The theology of greed evidenced in Word of Faith Charismatic churches, based upon positive confession and 'name it and claim it' ideas, did not arise until the mid-20th century.

Much of what constitutes modern church life and teaching is modern and unbiblical.

Scripture quotations are from The New King James Version
© Thomas Nelson 1982

Paul Fahy Copyright © 2012
Understanding Ministries
<http://www.understanding-ministries.com>