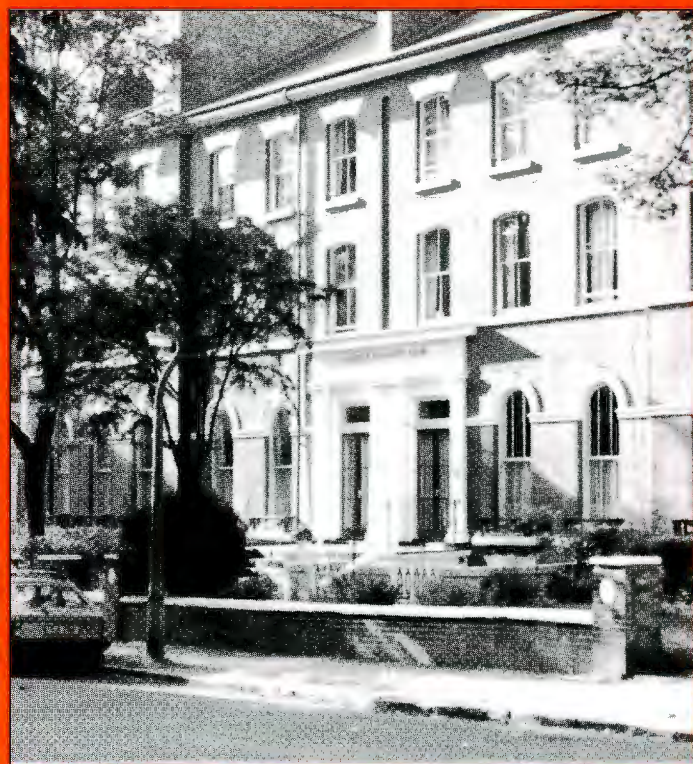


# REFORMATION TODAY



SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 1993

135

# THE CAREY CONFERENCE FOR MINISTERS

## The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire

### 5-7 January 1994

Theme: *The Grace of Law*

Visiting speaker: Robert Godfrey, President of Westminster Seminary, California

Application to: John Rubens, 22 Leith Road, Darlington, Co Durham DL3 8BQ



*Dr Robert Godfrey*

*Qui scit bene distinguere inter Legem et Evangelium, Deo gratias agat, et sciat se esse Theologum* – ‘The man who is able rightly to distinguish between the law and the gospel may thank God and know himself to be a theologian!’ (Charles Bridges in *The Christian Ministry*.)

		Arrival Time	The True Bounds of Christian Freedom <i>Geoff Thomas</i>	Martin Luther – The Law & the Gospel <i>Robert Godfrey</i>
John Calvin & the Pentateuch Moral, Civil & Ceremonial Law <i>Robert Godfrey</i>	The NT use of the Law <i>Erroll Hulse</i>	Maintaining Discipline in the Churches . . . .	Prayer and Sharing	The Law & Gospel Preaching  <i>Peter Jeffery</i>
The Ordination of Women <i>Robert Godfrey</i>	The Law and Gospel Holiness <i>Bob Sheehan</i>			

Front cover: *Part of the FOREIGN MISSIONS CLUB, 20-26 Aberdeen Park, London N5 2BJ (tel 071-226 2663). FMC celebrates its centenary this year. The Club has served many thousands of missionaries, students and visitors from abroad and its central but quiet situation still makes it a haven for Christians visiting the capital city. For two years the editor and his wife lived in the tower room on the second floor seen to the left of the picture. Many life-long friendships were forged at the Club between students who, in the 1950s, enthusiastically enjoyed the benefits of instruction under the ministry of Martyn Lloyd-Jones at Westminster Chapel and Ernest Kevan at London Bible College. Amongst the number were David Fountain who was later to pastor Spring Road Evangelical Church, Southampton for 25 years, and Iain Murray, founder of the Banner of Truth Trust.*

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# Editorial

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## How did we receive the Bible?

The role of God in the giving of the Bible is that of Creator. The Church's role in Scripture is that of recognising what has been created. What was created came through human authorship. The Holy Spirit created the world initially out of nothing and then shaped it in six days. The Scriptures came into being over about 1,500 years as men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet 1:21). The humanness of Scripture and the various ways in which inspiration was given at different times was the subject of detailed exposition by Bob Sheehan in RT 133. But how do we know the difference between what is truly inspired and that which falls short of divine inspiration? In other words, what is 'the canon': that body of sacred writings accepted as genuine? That task of recognition has taken place and the story is well told in this issue.

## The Bible and Science

Brian Edwards, minister of Hook Evangelical church in Surbiton, Surrey, has revised and expanded his book, *Nothing but the Truth* (392 pages paperback, EP, £9.95). This most helpful book about the Bible was first published in 1978. This updated edition provides a handbook on the subject of the Bible suitable for all Christians. His style is most readable as he deals with such questions as: 'Who are the critics of the Bible and what are they saying?' 'What about supposed errors and contradictions?' 'What about archaeology?' and 'What about science?' More and more in the secular world the idea is advanced that the Bible is unreliable for scientific reasons. How should we regard science in its relationship to the Bible? As readers will see for themselves Brian Edwards handles this lucidly.

Also included from Brian Edwards' highly commended book is a section from his chapter *The Story of our English Bible*. He outlines the exciting chronicle in 30 pages including Wycliffe's Bible, Tyndale's, The Authorised Version, (which section we include in this issue), The Douai, Ronald A Knox's, the Jerusalem Bible, the American RSV, J B Phillips's, Berkeley's, the Amplified, the Good News Bible, the NEB, the NASB, the NIV, and the New KJV.

Basic to translation is the question of the manuscripts. Brian Edwards explains simply how families of manuscripts developed. He describes the debate surrounding the Textus Receptus and the Eclectic Text.

We love the Scriptures and are grateful not only for the wonder of their origin but also their preservation and translation into many languages.

# The Carey Family Conference



*Pastor Tom Lutz helping the children  
Teachers dressed in 18th Century costumes*



*Sue Lutz*

A memorable feature of the Carey Family Conference in Bolney near Cuckfield, Sussex was the practical applicatory ministry on the theme of Christlikeness by Tom Lutz, pastor of Edgewood Baptist Church, Anderson, Indiana, USA. In addition Tom and Sue Lutz, assisted by Rhiannon Weber and Anna Symonds, taught the 6 to 12 year old group every morning on the theme of Jonathan Edwards. As part of the exercise there was the handiwork of making a quality clock set to go for the next 40 years with the help of an annual battery replacement! The carefully planned morning times were a superb example of the benefits of thorough, painstaking preparatory work for children.

Andrew King of the New England Road Evangelical Church, Haywards Heath, David Ellis of Cuckfield, Dr Kenneth Brownell pastor of East London Baptist Tabernacle and Erroll Hulse of Leeds ministered at the morning conference sessions. Kenneth Brownell was asked to tell us something of the work in London. In Spurgeon's day East London Tabernacle was led by Archibald Brown. With a congregation of 4000 it was like a sister church to Spurgeon's.

Congregations in London have shrunk since then. Now the East London Tabernacle congregation numbers about 250. The church sustains two full time evangelists, one to students, and one to the surrounding Bengali people numbering about 40,000.

Twenty five churches were represented and an excellent spirit of fellowship, unity and edification characterised the conference throughout.

Cassettes are available at £3 each from: Carey Conference Cassettes, Crag House Farm, Cookridge, Leeds LS16 7NH.

1 The Parables from Mark	David Ellis
2 The Miracles from Mark	Andrew King
3 Jesus only Saviour	Erroll Hulse
4 Evangelism	Kenneth Brownell
5 Christ the pattern for life	Tom Lutz
6 Christ the pattern for believers	Tom Lutz
7 Christ the pattern for husbands	Tom Lutz
8 Christ the pattern for service	Tom Lutz
9 Christ the pattern for leaders	Tom Lutz

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# Canonical Scripture and its Authority

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*This article forms part of a series on the subject of God's Revelation: 'A Self-Revealing God' (RT127); and 'God has Spoken - An Exposition of Special Revelation' (RT 133).*

*Bob Sheehan*

God's general revelation to all men<sup>1</sup> has been supplemented by a special revelation to specific men given in two stages: the Old Testament era and the New Testament era.<sup>2</sup> The fact that specific men received this revelation makes it liable to be lost to the rest of humanity unless the content of that revelation is recorded.

Writing is known to have been well advanced from before 3000 BC in the Ancient Near East and therefore to have been part of society even in pre-patriarchal days. When we read of Moses being commanded to write God's judgment against Amalek on a scroll he would have had no difficulty in fulfilling the command.<sup>3</sup>

Throughout the books which constitute our Old Testament there are many references to obeying laws written in books, placing a high esteem on written laws and studying books.<sup>4</sup>

## **Which books are a record of special revelation in the Old Testament era?**

We will seek to answer this from the perspectives of:

1. The Jews
2. Christ and his apostles

We will then answer one objection based on references to non-canonical books.

### *1. The Jews*

We have seen in earlier studies that the Jews who lived after the days of Malachi, in the centuries leading up to the coming of Christ and as contemporaries of Christ and his apostles, saw the days of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi as the end of the age of the prophets. They looked forward to the days when the Messiah would come but saw no real prophets existing in their own days. As the rabbis expressed it so dramatically, 'The Holy Spirit had departed from Israel.'<sup>5</sup>

The Jews also accepted that throughout the age of the prophets back in the days of Moses there had been a constant succession of prophets. These prophets had not only spoken under inspiration but they also wrote, as Josephus expressed it, 'as they were taught by the very inspiration of God... Prophets have written the original and earliest account of things as they learned them of God himself by inspiration'.<sup>6</sup> The prophets were God's mouth and God's hand, his mouthpieces and his penmen.

Once the succession of prophets ceased not only did verbal prophecy cease but no more prophetic Scriptures could be written. All the writings subsequent to the days of the prophets were 'not worthy of equal credit with the earlier records because there has not been since the exact succession of prophets'.<sup>7</sup>

The Jews considered the Old Testament canon as containing twenty-four or twenty-two books. The difference in number is simply due to the tendency to treat Judges and Ruth as either one book or two and Jeremiah and Lamentations in the same way. These twenty-two or twenty-four books are parallel to our thirty-nine books but are computed differently, for example, the twelve minor prophets are considered as one book not twelve. The books begin with Genesis and end with Chronicles.

There is evidence as early as the second century BC for the division of the Old Testament into three sections.<sup>8</sup> The order of the books in our Bible is different from the order in the Hebrew Bible. Our order owes more to the Greek Bible, the Septuagint, than to the Hebrew. These three sections were the Law, the Prophets and the Writings.

When Jeshua Ben Sira translated his grandfather's book 'Ecclesiasticus' into Greek in 132 BC, he described his relative in the preface as a student of 'the law and the prophets and the other books of the fathers' and 'the law itself, the prophecies and the rest of the books'.<sup>9</sup>

Philo of Alexandria (c20 BC - AD 50) also indicates a three-fold division of the canon referring to 'the laws, inspired oracles given through the prophets, hymns and the other books by which knowledge and piety may be increased and brought to perfection'.<sup>10</sup>

Among some Jews the Old Testament was also referred to under a dual heading, 'the Law and the Prophets'. This title appears in the Apocryphal book 2 Maccabees and within four references in documents discovered from Qumran.<sup>11</sup>

It is, therefore, clear that the various Jewish sects of the Christian era had no substantial differences over the limits of canonical Scripture. Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes accepted the same body of authoritative literature as the authentic, inspired record of God's revelation to Israel.

## *2. The view of Christ and his apostles*

It has been confidently asserted: 'Our Lord and his apostles might differ from the religious leaders of Israel about the meaning of the Scriptures: there is no suggestion that they differed about the limits of the Scriptures.' 'When we think of Jesus and his Palestinian apostles we may be confident that they agreed with contemporary leaders in Israel about the contents of the canon.'<sup>12</sup>

Support for these confident assertions comes from the New Testament. There are numerous quotations and allusions to the Old Testament throughout the New Testament writings. One study lists nearly one hundred and fifty sayings of Jesus in the first three Gospels alone. Another claims that 10% of all the recorded words of Jesus were quotations from the Old Testament. At the back of my Greek New Testament there is a list of over three hundred and fifty New Testament quotations from the Old Testament found in Matthew to 2 Peter.<sup>13</sup> Our Lord and his apostles saturated their writings and sayings with the Old Testament.

Whenever our Lord deviated from the Pharisees about 'Scripture' the debate was never over which books constituted Scripture but always over the interpretation of Scripture. When the Lord referred to 'the law' or 'the law and the prophets' or 'the law and the prophets and psalms', no-one ever asked him to define what he meant.<sup>14</sup> There was an agreement on the canon of Old Testament Scripture. No Jew would have misunderstood our Lord's spoken warning that all the righteous blood shed from the days of Abel to Zechariah, son of Berekiah, would be visited on that generation. Abel's murder was recorded in Genesis, the first book of the Hebrew Old Testament; Zechariah's murder is reported in Chronicles, the last book of the Hebrew Old Testament.<sup>15</sup> Jesus was warning that all the guilt that had been incurred from the first to the last page of Old Testament Scripture would be visited on them. By so saying, he indicated his acceptance of the limits of the Hebrew canon.

## *3. The New Testament use of the Apocryphal books*

A challenge has been raised to the claim that our Lord and his apostles only held Old Testament books to be canonical on the grounds that in the New Testament there are allusions to and quotations from non-canonical sources.

Dennefield saw a reference in our Lord's command that we should forgive men when they sin against us so that God might forgive our sins, to the apocryphal statement, 'Forgive your neighbour the hurt that he has done you and then your sins will be pardoned when you pray.'<sup>16</sup> He found half a dozen similar parallels.

However, the existence of parallels between biblical and non-biblical books does not imply any necessary dependence nor does it make a book canonical because on one issue it expresses a truth. Throughout Christian history there have been

those who have had a high regard for the Greek philosopher Plato and they found 'Christian' ideas in his writings but no-one seriously suggests that Jesus made allusions to the writings of Plato or considered his works canonical.

Emphasis has sometimes also been placed on the acceptance by biblical writers of ideas from non-canonical sources, for example, Paul names the Egyptian magicians who opposed Moses as Jannes and Jambres, names not mentioned in the Old Testament but frequently mentioned in Jewish tradition. Jude alludes to a dispute over Moses' body,<sup>17</sup> again not recorded in the Old Testament but reported in Jewish tradition.

It cannot, however, be argued that the acceptance of a particular fact from a traditional source gives credence to the whole tradition or canonises the whole source. An appeal to something because it is true in one respect does not require it to be treated as true in all respects.

Special emphasis is placed on Jude's reference to Enoch's prophecy. It is argued that a *quotation* from an extra-canonical source implies the acceptance of the source as canonical. As soon as that principle is applied to Paul's quotations from heathen poets such as Epimenides, Aratus and Menander its fallacy is evident.<sup>18</sup> There is a difference between quoting a source and quoting a source as *Scripture*. Many truthful things have been written outside of the Bible and not all truth is biblical.

Allusions and quotations occur in Scripture to writings which are truthful in regard to the thing quoted. The Scriptures themselves are quoted because as a whole they were considered truthful by Jesus and his apostles and the Jews of their day.

### **What degree of authority did the canonical books have?**

We will again seek to understand:

1. The Jewish view
2. The view of Christ and his apostles

#### *1. The Jewish view*

Philo the Alexandrian expressed the view of Scripture held by every loyal Jew in the intertestamental age and the first century AD, 'The Jews would die 10,000 times rather than to permit one single word to be altered of their Scriptures.'<sup>19</sup>

Josephus also reflected the same commitment to the harmony and authority of the canonical Scriptures tracing their authority and accuracy to their divine inspiration. 'Nothing can be better attested than the writings authorised among us. In



fact, they could not be subject to any discord, for only that which the prophets wrote ages ago is approved among us, as they were taught by the very inspiration of God... For we have not an innumerable multitude of books among us, disagreeing from and contradicting one another, but only twenty-two books, which contain the records of all past times; which are justly believed to be divine... During so many ages as have already passed, no-one has been so bold as either to add anything to them, to take anything from them, or to make any change in them; but it is become natural to all Jews... to esteem these books to contain divine doctrines, and to persist in them and, if occasion be, willingly to die for them... Prophets have written the original and earliest accounts of things as they learned them of God himself by inspiration.<sup>20</sup>

The great authority on Judaism, G F Moore, summarised the Jewish attitude, 'It was an uncontested axiom that every syllable of Scripture had the veracity and authority of the Word of God.'<sup>21</sup>

## 2. *The view of Christ and his apostles*

Did Jesus and his apostles also view the Old Testament as 'inspired of God', 'divine', 'not subject to any discord', 'the Word of God' in 'every syllable'? We have already noted the extensive use of the Old Testament in the New Testament writings and that the doctrines and opinions of the Old Testament are widely quoted and allusions are made to them.

*a. Specific statements.* There are, however, specific statements about the authority and inspiration of Old Testament Scripture. We shall consider one from our Lord and the other from Paul.

In a dispute over his right to refer to himself as the Son of God, our Lord quoted the 82nd Psalm and supported its authority by the affirmation, 'and the Scripture cannot be broken'.<sup>22</sup> The word 'broken' has the meaning of rendered void or invalidated. It is a clear statement of our Lord's view of Scripture and its unbreakable authority. In making a statement, almost casually in the middle of a debate, he demonstrated how fundamental this way of thinking about Scripture was to him. He and his opponents were at least one in this view of scriptural authority. As C K Barrett comments on the statement, 'The principle was an axiom both to Judaism and primitive Christianity; the two differed only in their beliefs about the fulfilment of Scripture.'<sup>23</sup>

When we turn to Paul we have the clear statement: 'All Scripture is God-breathed' (Greek - *theopneustos*). B B Warfield long ago demonstrated by reference to parallel words consisting of *theos*, a verb and the ending - *tos*, that the meaning is passive.<sup>24</sup> The Scriptures do not breathe out God. God breathes out Scripture. The Scriptures, the writings themselves, are his Word, proceeding from his mouth.

The harmony of Paul's view with the Jewish view of his day can be seen by comparing his statement with that of Josephus, who claimed that the Old Testament prophets wrote the Scriptures 'according to the "pneustia": that which originates in God'.<sup>25</sup>

*b. Specific attitudes.* We are not, however, merely left to specific statements but to specific attitudes to Scripture which show the general view that Christ and his apostles had of Scripture.

For our Lord and his apostles whatever Scripture said had the authority of God himself. The Old Testament Scriptures record the institution and definition of marriage without identifying the speaker. The New Testament attributes the words to the Creator himself. The second psalm lacks any introduction in the Psalter but its words are recorded in the New Testament as God speaking through the Holy Spirit by the mouth of David. The first chapter of Hebrews is full of Old Testament quotations unattributed in the Old Testament but attributed to God in the New.<sup>26</sup> It is evident that the New Testament identifies what Scripture says with what God says.

In addition to this, there are many examples of arguments being hinged upon the minutest details of the Old Testament. This is not surprising as Jesus gave authority to the smallest letter and least stroke of a pen in the Old Testament.<sup>27</sup>

In the New Testament arguments could be based on single Old Testament words. Our Lord built arguments on the Old Testament use of the words 'lord' and 'gods'. The writer of the Hebrews argues on the basis of the words 'today' and 'rest' as well as the phrase 'yet once more'.<sup>28</sup>

Even more powerfully, the New Testament Scriptures build arguments on verb tenses, singular and plural forms of nouns and Old Testament silences. Our Lord proved the resurrection from the fact that God said, 'I am' not 'I was' or 'I will be'. Paul argued for the significance of seed not seeds. Melchizedek's history is drawn from Old Testament omissions.<sup>29</sup>

Argument at this level with this degree of confidence in the detail of the Old Testament demonstrates the reliability that the Lord and his apostles considered the Old Testament to have. To them it was infallible (trustworthy) and inerrant (free from error). Coming from God's mouth it could not be rendered false.

## **Is the Christian canon wider than the Jewish?**

### *1. The New Testament evidence*

In considering special revelation (*RT133*) we saw that a new age of revelation dawned with John the Baptist. Our Lord and his apostles revealed the truth that belonged to Christ.

Our Lord was entirely confident that none of his words would be lost and gave the Holy Spirit to his apostles to ensure their perfect memory of his teaching as well as to guide them into all truth.<sup>30</sup>

The apostles fulfilled their responsibility not only by teaching but also by writing. The false teachers soon understood this and from the beginning began to forge letters as if from the apostles. The apostles had to take care to maintain the authority of all their own teachings, whether given by letter or by word of mouth, as well as to distinguish them from forgeries by various means.<sup>31</sup>

When the apostles wrote their letters they were conscious of possessing great authority. They commanded that their letters should be read to all the Christians. They considered it the duty of all their readers to hold fast to the truths they had written and commanded separating from those who would not obey the command given in their letters.<sup>32</sup>

This claim for authority did not only arise merely out of their being recipients of revelation but was accompanied by their conviction about their own inspiration as writers. They claimed to speak words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit and to be writing the Lord's commands.<sup>33</sup>

Within the New Testament writings there is a recognition of each others' writings as Scripture. Therefore, Paul quotes both Deuteronomy 25:4 and Luke 10:7 verbatim after the introductory formula 'The Scripture says'.<sup>34</sup> It is entirely inadequate to argue that Paul was merely quoting a saying of Jesus or even a collation of sayings, for neither of these could accurately be termed 'Scripture', a term used in the Bible for written canonical statements.

Peter also used the term 'Scripture' to describe New Testament writings. He reminds his readers that the teaching he was giving was consistent with the things 'our beloved Paul wrote according to the wisdom given him, as also in all his letters speaking in them concerning these things'. For Peter, Paul wrote according to the wisdom given him. More than that, however, he warns them of the difficult things in Paul's letters which are easily twisted by unstable people who distort the writings of Paul 'even as the rest of the Scriptures'.<sup>35</sup> Peter has no hesitation in including Paul's letters in the Scriptures.

The apostle John also gave the Christians a test of orthodoxy. Whoever agreed with the apostles in their teaching was of God, whoever disagreed was not of God.<sup>36</sup> All doctrine had to be tested by the standard of apostolic teaching whether verbal or written.

## *2. The post-apostolic age*

In the generations immediately following the apostolic age there were two sources of authority for the primitive Church, the Old Testament and the

apostolic testimony. In his study of early Christian doctrine, J N Kelly concludes: 'This two-fold appeal to the united witness of the Old Testament and the apostles was characteristic of the age.'<sup>37</sup>

For the Church immediately after the apostles, 'the importance of the Old Testament as a doctrinal norm in the primitive Church cannot be exaggerated... The parallel norm, the testimony of the apostles, was equally important in theory, and of course more important in fact'.<sup>38</sup>

Faithfulness to the apostolic testimony meant that careful enquiries were made of those who had heard and been taught by the apostles as to their teaching, and this oral tradition was supplemented by an intense interest in the apostolic writings. Kelly affirms that 'the high prestige enjoyed by the Pauline Epistles and the Gospels' and 'the number of citations from them in this period is quite remarkable'. He goes on to assert that 'there is no evidence for beliefs or practices current in the period which were not vouched for in books later known as the New Testament'.<sup>39</sup>

The Pauline Epistles began to be circulated as a group rather than as individual letters early on in the second century. The four Gospels as a collection followed soon after. The gathering of the New Testament documents began soon after the close of the apostolic age.

### *3. The tests of canonicity*

What did the early Christians require of a book before it was acknowledged as part of New Testament Scripture? The fundamental requirement was divine inspiration. If a book was to be given equal authority with the God-breathed writings of the Old Testament, it had to be God-breathed. How was the inspiration to be tested?

The first question asked of a book was whether it had apostolic authorship. Those books which did have apostolic authority were readily accepted. Paul's epistles were, therefore, quickly received as inspired.

However, even at an early period 'apostolic authorship in the direct sense was not insisted on, if some form of apostolic authority could be established'.<sup>40</sup> Therefore works by associates of the apostles and members of the Lord's family were also accepted because they had apostolic authorisation. Paul's quotation of Luke in his first letter to Timothy authorised Luke's Gospel because it was recognised by an apostle as Scripture.

Additional to apostolic authorship or authority was antiquity. Documents which post-dated the apostolic age could not be accepted as part of Scripture, however beneficial or orthodox their sentiments.

As increasing numbers of writings claiming to be apostolic arose in the second half of the second century, two other tests were used. They were scrutinised for unorthodoxies which would exclude them from being part of the truth and they were dismissed if they were only favoured by a party within Christendom rather than being widely accepted throughout the Christian world.

The fundamental reason for formally accepting a book as part of the New Testament was the divine inspiration given to its writing, which inspiration was communicated through or accredited to an apostle. As the Jews accepted the prophetic word from God so the Christians accepted the apostolic word. Neither was made a book or part of Scripture. They simply *recognised* it as such.

## References

- <sup>1</sup> See RT127
- <sup>2</sup> See RT133
- <sup>3</sup> Ex 17:14-16
- <sup>4</sup> Josh 1:7-8; 1 Sam 2:3; Ps 119; Dan 9:2
- <sup>5</sup> See Harris R L (1957) *Inspiration and Canonicity of the Bible*, Zondervan, pp168-169
- <sup>6</sup> Josephus quoted Pache R (1974) *The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture*, Moody Press, p163
- <sup>7</sup> Josephus quoted Bruce F F (1988) *The Canon of Scripture*, Chapter House, p33
- <sup>8</sup> Harrison R K (1971) *Introduction to the Old Testament*, Tyndale Press, p271
- <sup>9</sup> Prologue to *Ecclesiasticus in the OT Apocrypha*
- <sup>10</sup> Quoted Bruce op.cit. p46
- <sup>11</sup> 2 Maccabees 15:9; Harrison op.cit. p276
- <sup>12</sup> Bruce op.cit. pp28,41
- <sup>13</sup> France R T (1982) *Jesus and the Old Testament*, Baker, pp259-263; Rimmer quoted Lightner R P (1978) *The Saviour and the Scriptures*, Baker, p28; *Greek New Testament* (1975) United Bible Societies, pp900-903
- <sup>14</sup> Jn 10:32-34; Matt 5:17; Luke 24:44-45
- <sup>15</sup> Matt 23:35-36; Gen 4:8; 2 Chr 24:20
- <sup>16</sup> Referred to in Wenham J (1979) *Christ and the Bible*, IVP, p145 n2; Matt 6:14; *Ecclesiasticus* 28:2
- <sup>17</sup> 2 Tim 3:8; Jude 9
- <sup>18</sup> Jude 14-15; Acts 17:28; 1 Cor 15:33; Tit 1:12
- <sup>19</sup> Philo quoted Pache op.cit. p164
- <sup>20</sup> Josephus quoted Pache op.cit. p163
- <sup>21</sup> Moore G F, *Judaism*, vol 1, p239
- <sup>22</sup> Jn 10:35
- <sup>23</sup> Barrett C K (1970) *The Gospel According to Saint John*, SPCK, p320
- <sup>24</sup> 2 Tim 3:16; Warfield B B (1981) *Works*, Baker, I p265
- <sup>25</sup> Josephus quoted Pache op.cit. p46
- <sup>26</sup> Gen 2:24; Matt 19:4-5; Acts 4:25; Ps 2:1-3; Heb 1; Deut 32:43; Ps 45:6-7; 102:25-27
- <sup>27</sup> Matt 5:18
- <sup>28</sup> Matt 22:45; Jn 10:34; Heb 3:7-11; 12:26
- <sup>29</sup> Matt 22:32; Gal 3:16; Heb 7:3
- <sup>30</sup> Matt 24:35; Jn 14:26; 16:13
- <sup>31</sup> 2 Thess 2:2,15; 3:17; Gal 6:11
- <sup>32</sup> 1 Thess 5:27; 2 Thess 2:15; 3:14-15
- <sup>33</sup> 1 Cor 2:13; 14:37
- <sup>34</sup> 1 Tim 5:18
- <sup>35</sup> 2 Pet 3:15-16
- <sup>36</sup> 1 Jn 4:1-6
- <sup>37</sup> Kelly J N D (1968) *Early Christian Doctrines*, A & C Black, p31
- <sup>38</sup> *ibid* p32
- <sup>39</sup> *ibid* p33
- <sup>40</sup> Bruce F F op.cit. p258

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# Alfred Saker – Pioneer Missionary

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by Erroll Hulse



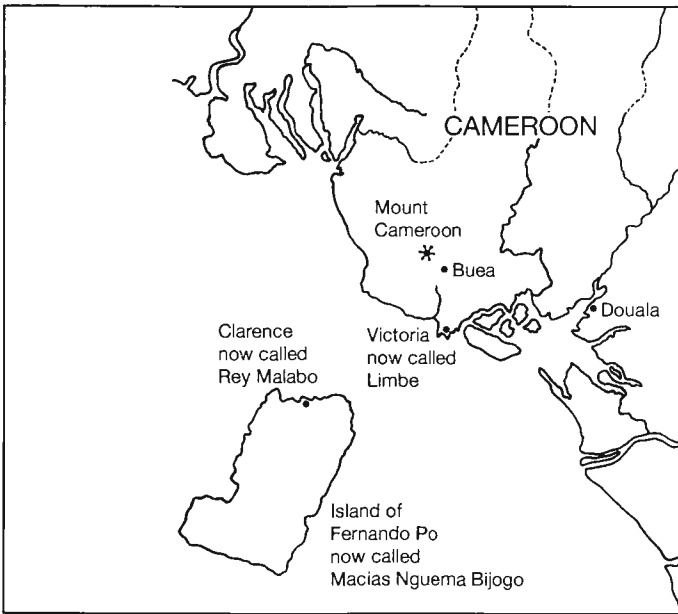
*Alfred Saker*



*Mrs Helen Saker*

Alfred Saker (1814-1880) was born in the village of Ightham near Borough Green in Kent. He was what English people call a poorly child, physically so feeble that the old family nurse said he was not worth raising. At the time when he attended junior school only three quarters of a mile away his brother had to carry him at least part of the way. Yet this weak specimen turned out to be one of the most versatile all-round missionaries in the history of the Church. William Carey was a specialist as a linguist and prolific as a translator but also extremely versatile in his abilities. Saker was even more of an all-rounder. He became an able preacher, pastor, church planter, pioneer missionary, linguist and Bible translator, explorer, engineer, town planner, statesman and politician, brick and cement manufacturer, builder, carpenter, bricklayer, physician, educationist, technician and printer. He set out with the principal aim of being a pastor and church planter and the other activities came through necessity. When faced with rugged needs and survival he first prayed for wisdom and strength and then tackled the work with intense concentration and zeal.

Saker survived what was known as the 'white man's grave'. There had been previous attempts at gospel pioneering on the West African Coast along with



*Map of the coastal area where Alfred Saker laboured*

explorations to the interior. In 1768 the Moravians sent missionaries to the Guinea coast but they soon died of fever. Later six missionaries from Scotland tried to establish a work on the West Coast. Three died, one was martyred and two returned home.

Missionary service in the last century involved a calculated sacrifice of laying down one's life. The words of our Lord are applicable:

*'Anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it' (Matt 10:38).*

The risks involved applied equally to the wives of missionaries who had just as much to endure as their husbands and in addition had to carry the burden of illness and death of their children. The call involved both man and wife. Before her marriage to Alfred, Helen Jessup had offered herself to the Church Missionary Society, but it was very much more difficult then for women to find openings. Subsequently she never faltered in her support of her husband.

### **Early life and conversion**

Alfred Saker began life with a feeble physique but soon it was clear that he was gifted with an extremely active, retentive and intelligent mind. He excelled at all



*Pastor Joseph Majimbo (left), the editor, and pastor Samson Khama, by the bronze memorial erected in honour of Alfred Saker by the coast of Victoria (now Limbe). The plaque reads: Alfred Saker missionary to Africa who landed, founded and named the township VICTORIA – This tablet is erected in memory of his devoted work, to mark the centenary of Victoria 1858-1958.*

subjects to the extent that he was able very early to lecture in subjects such as geology and astronomy. Among his interests were geometry, navigation and geography. Before the age of 15 he obtained two large globes of the world. His exceptional ability was not confined to his intellect. He was skilful with his hands. Before he was 16 he built a small steam engine. At the time of his marriage in 1840 he was employed as a draughtsman in Devonport Dockyard. It was as though he was a universal man for if all these gifts were not enough, he was also able to play on any musical instrument.

His conversion had come about in a very simple way. At the age of 19 on a Sunday evening he passed a small Baptist Chapel. Arrested by the singing, he was irresistibly drawn in. He heard the gospel and accepted its message of salvation. He began to attend regularly, was baptised and became an active church member.

At a time of heightening interest in missions the call to missionary service came during the winter of 1842-43. A work had begun on the West Coast of Africa. A deputation from the Baptist Missionary Society visited the church in Devonport. On hearing of the need, Alfred Saker experienced the inward constraint of calling. The couple already had a young family and his wife had not been able to attend this meeting, but after a week of thought and prayer, she endorsed her husband's sense of call.



Team work was essential if the work was to have any hope of practical success and it was the Baptist Missionary Society that organised pioneering missionary work on the West Coast. The vision for reaching West Africa had been increased by a remarkable providence. The ship in which some missionaries were travelling was struck by lightning and the destruction of the mast resulted in the vessel drifting to Jamaica. There these missionaries met local believers who had come to the West Indies as a result of the slave trade. They longed to promote gospel work in the land of their origins. This proved to be the beginning of a partnership in which missionaries from the Caribbean Islands joined forces with British missionaries.

One Jamaican missionary, Joseph Merrick, gave up the pastoring of a large church to pioneer in Cameroon. He became an outstanding missionary and laboured from 1843 to 1849 when he died of malaria. He was brilliant at languages and very quickly mastered the Isubu language successfully translating sections of the New Testament for publication.

Soon after their application Alfred and Helen were accepted for missionary service by the Baptist Missionary Society. Before leaving England they lost a baby girl. Together with another missionary couple they set sail during 1843. The first destination was Jamaica. Forty-two Jamaican Christians including children embarked for the continued voyage to West Africa which was dreadful in every way, made worse by the captain who was malicious, brutal and corrupt. Despite the difficulties of overcrowding and shortage of food and water, Bible study, devotions and studies in language and missionary principles were carried on every day.

### **Conditions in Cameroon**

Looking at the map we observe that about 20 miles from the coast there is the mountainous island of Fernando Po, about 40 miles long and 20 wide. On a clear day looking across the sea towards the mainland, the volcanic Cameroon Mountain can be seen. Here on Fernando Po was Clarence, a small settlement of 1017 souls in 201 families, where a spiritual work had begun among liberated slaves who made their living by supplying visiting ships. One of the chiefs had been converted and was active in taking the gospel back to his people.

There were seventy-nine church members when the Sakers arrived. On the first Sunday after their arrival Alfred preached on John 3:16. The sermon was instrumental in the conversion of Thomas Horton Johnson, a well known Cameroonian who had been working on sailing ships. Very soon Johnson was to become of crucial and enduring help to Alfred who used Clarence as a base to establish missionary stations among the mainland people of the Dualla language. This enterprise was formidable because of civil war among the tribes.

The atrocious persecution by the Roman Catholic regime of the Christians in the island of Fernando Po might surprise readers. The recently published biography of Robert Reid Kalley who was used to evangelise the island of Madeira in the mid-nineteenth century provides a parallel account. Kalley was both a medical doctor and an extremely gifted evangelist. He established a medical practice in Madeira and then sought and received ordination as a minister of the gospel in 1839. Continuing his medical practice he planted a church which grew with such vitality and numbers that severe persecution followed. On 9 August 1846, Madeira's 'St Bartholomew's Day', the Roman Catholic priests succeeded in stirring up the people to use sword and fire to destroy the Bible believers. Homes were burned and Christians attacked. The mob tried to locate Kalley intent on putting him to death but he escaped disguised as a sick old woman being carried in a hammock. In this way he was taken to a nearby ship. Later that year 200 believers were able to emigrate in the ship 'William' to the Caribbean followed by 500 in another ship 'The Lord Seaton'. Altogether persecution drove 2,000 believers to the Caribbean. Kalley himself spent the rest of his life in Brazil where he enjoyed a fruitful ministry. The excellent biography of Kalley by William Forsyth is available from Evangelical Press. (William B Forsyth, *The Wolf from Scotland*, The Story of Robert Reid Kalley, 238 pp paperback, EP, 1988).

With Johnson Saker began to evangelise on the mainland on 19th March 1845 at a station called Bethel. The first convert was baptised in 1849. A church was formed which in the next four years grew to 24 and thereafter multiplied, other stations being established on the mainland.

As remote missionary outposts are served by Missionary Aviation Fellowship planes today so in the middle of the 19th century the Baptist Missionary Society owned a sailing ship called 'The Dove' which plied the coasts of West Africa bringing essential supplies of food, equipment and materials to the missionary teams.

Four factors threatened the survival of the missionaries: disease, war, theft and starvation.

The first predicament which on several occasions almost brought the mission to an end was malaria. More than half of those who attempted to establish themselves in West Africa died of this disease, many within their first two or three years. The Sakers lost two children through malaria and both Helen and Alfred suffered severely throughout their lives, Alfred sometimes so severely that his friends thought he was about to die.

Over a period of service of 32 years from 1843 to 1876 he returned to England six times, first in 1850 for a period of three months, then in 1855, 1863, 1870, for

a short time in 1874 and for the last time in 1876 when his strength finally ran out. He died in England in 1880. The furloughs were necessitated by the need to recuperate physically.

The second hazard was violent conflict. The indigenous people were at that time largely untouched by the outside world. Cannibalism was the order of the day. When Alfred determined to explore the interior he was told plainly by Thomas Horton Johnson that he would be eaten. Alfred replied that he was too thin to be eaten! The missionaries were sometimes caught up in violent clashes between tribal chiefs. Throughout his life in Cameroon Alfred was involved as a peace-maker on a number of occasions, seeking to calm opposing factions. He never resorted to armed defence and once when his own house was subject to attack he simply stood his ground with his arm raised and the attackers were kept at bay as if by an invisible army of angels. It would have been very easy to kill him but they just could not do it.

On one occasion the missionaries found themselves between two warring factions. One tribal chief had procured a cannon from European traders. He threatened to destroy the missionary compound at 4.00 pm unless Alfred Saker sided with him. This Saker refused to do. Fear increased as the day wore on. Should the compound be abandoned? What should be done? Alfred was unmoved and counselled that the threat should be ignored and that work should be carried on normally. In the early afternoon a loud explosion was heard. It turned out that those making the threat did not know how to use the cannon properly and it exploded.

A third menace which almost wrecked the missionary effort was that of theft. Anything left unattended, tools, materials, food, or animals, were stolen. Even the posts for fencing would be stolen as soon as they were put up. At one stage the only way to survive was to keep a continual watch day and night. This was an exhausting exercise.

A fourth danger which threatened the lives of the missionaries was starvation. Part of the strategy in the tribal wars was to destroy the crops of the enemy thus leaving them destitute and powerless. With no food to buy from the local people the missionaries were reliant upon the visits of the missionary ship 'The Dove'. A desperate situation pertained if that failed.

### **The arrival of the Jesuits**

The most significant outside event in Alfred Saker's missionary experience was the arrival of a ship in 1856 at Fernando Po with six Jesuit priests who were imperious and soon commandeered whatever they pleased from the people. Also on board was the Governor General of all the islands belonging to Spain. He made a public proclamation that Roman Catholicism was the only religion of the

island, to the exclusion on pain of death of every other. For the church with a membership of about 85 this meant that a new home would have to be found.

Saker immediately responded to this crisis. He embarked on an exploration to the mainland seeking a place where a new settlement might be established for the displaced Christians of Fernando Po. A suitable site was found at Ambioses Bay which Alfred named Victoria. Government and law were essential for the new settlement. Alfred drafted a comprehensive constitution which was very practical in covering issues such as roads and hygiene. Other notable clauses included the statement that the Word of God was the foundation of all the laws. Freedom of worship was stressed. All business was to be suspended for the Lord's Day. No trees were to be cut down without permission. Freedom for trade was to be maintained but alcohol was prohibited (the practical background being the abuse of strong drink as an instrument of barter by traders, which had disastrous effects and caused much suffering among the indigenous people).

Once the new settlement began, Alfred showed the exiles how to build their houses. Basic to all his work was the principle of training others and urging them to become skilled as soon as possible. He would demonstrate how to do something once, and then again, but after that the tool would be handed to the novice who would from then on have to do it himself. He trained printers, bricklayers and carpenters. He was criticised by the home mission board for spending too much time on designing and organising home building. While in most instances he was silent when criticised, to this censure he responded firmly by pointing out that the mortality rate had diminished in proportion to better housing.

### **Doctrinal belief**

The main driving motive behind all these missionary endeavours and the sacrifice and perseverance involved was the belief in the impending Great Judgment and the reality of eternal damnation for the lost. Saker believed that Africa's millions were going down into a lost eternity. He believed in original sin and its effects which have left the human race blind and alienated. From this darkness it was imperative that the Holy Spirit draw and rescue the fallen, giving them new birth through union with Christ.

The great central truths of evangelicalism were accepted without question. Since those times the tide of Modernism has swept over the main denominations. The Downgrade controversy took place in the Baptist denomination in 1887 and in the years that followed. The Fundamentalist movement followed in the first part of this century and in more recent years the Reformed Faith has been largely recovered. The era of these missionaries appears to be one which was not shaken by the Modernist movement. At least reference is not made to it in the biographies.

## **Closing days**

During 1872 Alfred announced the completion of an ambition which he had set himself from the beginning of his work in Africa. This was the translation of the whole Bible into the Dualla language. Various portions had been printed over the years but the work of bringing the whole Bible together was then undertaken by a team of workers alongside the missionary. The work ran to three volumes. Afterwards Alfred continued to work on revision.

The work of pioneering into the interior has already been alluded to. During his visit to England in 1874 a friend donated a small steam launch which assisted him greatly in the last period when he made three significant up-river trips into the interior. In 1876 he was compelled through physical weakness to return to England. This had always been a means by which he regained his health but this time he was truly worn out and was not able to recover. He died in 1880, his last words being, 'For thou art with me.' During his lifetime he lost three children. For long periods his family were away from him in England. They felt deeply the absence of their father. Lack of resentment in the children is evidenced by the fact that both surviving daughters later served as missionaries in Cameroon.

## **Main lessons**

1. The dedication of early missionaries and their wives is outstanding, something we rarely see in our circles today. Irrespective of personal cost, they gave themselves to the work and were prepared to sacrifice their lives for it.
2. Jesus said that in this world we would experience tribulation. These missionaries did not look for tribulation but when it came they did not allow it to deter them from their calling. They simply accepted that part of their work was to endure primitive conditions. Pain was expressed but not complaint. They did not grumble or express undue shock. It may well be that the creature comforts which surround us from birth ill equip us for conditions that are found in the Third World.
3. We have lived through a time when major denominations have declined into apostasy and missionary societies have received a bad reputation for usurping the place of local churches or insisting on secondary doctrinal beliefs (such as pre-millennialism). A result is the tendency in some quarters to reject agencies or societies altogether. We should note that the West African enterprise would never have taken off without the Baptist Missionary Society as an agency able to unite the contributions both of the British and West Indian (Caribbean) churches and gather and sustain a constant supply of support. The work would have collapsed if new missionaries were not recruited to replace those who died. For the refurbishment of losses it was necessary to purchase and maintain a ship to service the needs of the missionaries.

Idealism about one local church undertaking everything necessary for a missionary family is one thing and reality another. Surely it is better to fulfil the work with a society than fail to fulfil the missionary call. Reformed Baptists in America have 'Reformed Baptist Missionary Services' (RBMS) to assist them with the missionary vision and here in Britain we have 'Grace Baptist Mission'. Both these agencies are well based doctrinally and both respect the place of the local church.

4. We need to be realistic about the Roman Catholic Church. There are those within the Catholic Church who claim to be evangelical and who would like to be listed with other evangelical groupings. However the Roman Catholic Church has a long record of persecution. No doctrines have changed. Heretical doctrines have increased and no realistic attempt has been made to reform the Catholic Church. The Ecumenical movement has created a climate which has restrained the amount and severity of persecution as in Fernando Po in 1856 and Madeira in 1846. Those who claim to be Bible believers in the Catholic Church need to face the gulf between the Bible and R C practice.

5. Reading the life of Mr and Mrs Saker reminds us that the missionary mandate has not changed. Thousands of people groups still await the gospel. The need is just as urgent now as it was then. We have agencies who are looking for recruits. I visited the leader of such an agency recently. He is a Reformed Baptist. The agency serves 500 missionaries in Africa, who are mainly supported by and answerable to their home churches or denominations. At least seven couples are required at this time to fulfil a variety of functions.

6. Alfred Saker was weak physically but outstanding in his skills. Those who are called to be missionaries should not be deterred if they do not have so many gifts. Ours is a day of specialisation. Robert Kalley was a doctor and that opened the door for the use of his spiritual gifts. In the conversation referred to in the last paragraph I was told that the principal need in unevangelised parts of Africa is for those who are truly called, have a clear grasp of the gospel, and possess the qualities of character to persevere. Academic qualifications are important for some openings but generally speaking far too much stress is laid on that today and far too little on the spiritual qualities of the kind that were displayed by Alfred Saker and his wife.

### **Bibliography**

I have used two sources. The first is a 224 page biography, *Alfred Saker, The Pioneer of the Cameroons* by his daughter Emily, published by the Religious Tract Society in 1905. This was supplied by the Evangelical Library 78A Chiltern Street, London W1. The other, *Alfred Saker, Missionary to Africa* by Edward B Underhill of 192 pages, Carey Kingsgate Press Ltd, was first published in 1884 and reprinted in 1958. This biography is similar to the first but has some additional material. Spurgeon's College Library kindly loaned me this volume.

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## The Bible and Science

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*Our secular world tends to dismiss the Bible as untenable on scientific grounds. Who can believe the Bible today? How can anyone believe the Bible when it is against science? Brian Edwards deals with these objections head-on briefly and succinctly.*

Many find difficulty in Scripture because, in places, it appears to be contradicted by modern scientific theories and knowledge. Our reply to this is that if current scientific knowledge is our standard for judging the accuracy of Scripture then we must abandon our belief in the virgin birth, the resurrection, the miracles of our Lord and the fact that in creation God made everything out of nothing. In these examples the most that any scientist can say is that he has never observed them to happen.

As Christians we believe that God can, and does, intervene in the universe he has made. A great weakness in many supposed scientific conclusions is that people forget that when a scientist says, 'We have never seen this happen and we cannot explain how it happens; therefore it has never happened,' he is coming to a very false conclusion. Scientists cannot say that a virgin birth, or a resurrection from the dead, or creation out of nothing is impossible; no scientist knows enough about the universe to say this. He can only say, 'I have never seen it happen, and I do not know how it could happen', but the conclusion is not 'Therefore it did not happen' - that would be a very unscientific and even dishonest conclusion.

To avoid a clash with science it is at times claimed that the Bible is not a scientific textbook and therefore it does not make scientific statements. Of course it is true that the Bible is not a scientific textbook if by that we mean it does not always describe scientific facts in the language of modern science. But if that is the definition of a scientific textbook then few scientific publications issued before the last fifty years can be described as scientific either. Scientific language and theories are constantly changing.

It is a fact that the Bible does make claims about subjects that are of great interest to the scientist. The origin of the universe is one obvious example; and so is its description of a universal flood. The Bible describes both of these in a plain straightforward manner, and in language that men in every generation can understand. All these are facts capable, in some measure, of scientific investigation. It is true that miracles are not easily open to scientific investigation and in this sense they may be 'unscientific'. However, that does not make them against or contrary to science, unless, that is, we make a god of science.



*When Alfred Saker (see page 12ff) led the way in establishing a settlement on the mainland at Victoria he equipped it with a manifesto or constitution for public life, a town planning scheme, a school, a brick works, steam sawmill and printshop. Saker translated the whole Bible into the Dualla language, and actually had it printed in his own printing works. His daughter supervised the setting and proof reading. Alfred Saker is surely one of the most versatile missionaries in the history of the Church.*

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Science, by its very definition, can never reach a final statement. Fifty years ago scientists talked confidently of the laws discovered by Isaac Newton; then Einstein disproved many of them, and today some are trying to improve upon Einstein himself! It was once agreed that an atom was the smallest particle of matter and it was impossible to divide it; now every student of physics knows about the practical effects of splitting the atom! Science must always be ready to alter course when new facts demand such action. Revelation, on the other hand, is final. We therefore expect science, as it advances in knowledge, constantly to change and increasingly to support biblical statements. In this expectation we are not disappointed.

It is not our present concern to spend time considering the supposed scientific problems in biblical creation as described in the opening chapters of Genesis. All that we need to claim here is that many non-Christian scientists disagree with the modern theories of evolution as explanations for the origin of the universe, and that there are a large number of scientific books that defend biblical creation. To say that science has disproved the Bible, and especially the Genesis account of creation, is nothing less than a lie. The most we can say is that many scientists think the Bible to be wrong - but many do not think so. If we believe that revelation is more certain than science then we will have no hesitation in accepting God's record rather than man's ideas.

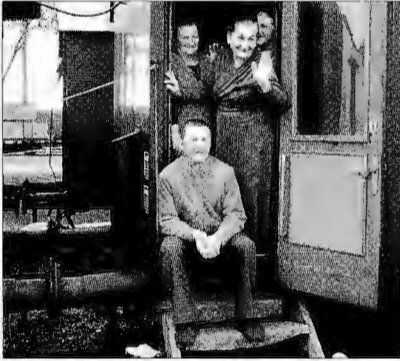
From: Brian Edwards, *Nothing but the Truth*, E P, 1993, 392pp, £9.95.



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## News – Croatia

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*Muslim family living in a railway carriage*



*David Griffiths reading and explaining the Scriptures*

### *David Griffiths*

Even with the increased coverage by the mass media in the UK most find the civil war in Yugoslavia difficult to comprehend. I will not attempt an analysis here but simply state that that part called Croatia has a population of about four million to which must be added half a million refugees. The Serbians dominated previously in the military forces of Yugoslavia and consequently have a great advantage in weaponry and military power. The Serbs have taken about one third of Croatia with the result that that which remains is filled to capacity and beyond with refugees. Much suffering has been inflicted and a variety of agencies have sought to provide relief. Survival has become increasingly difficult for the Croats especially the elderly.

Early in July I paid my second visit to Croatia. Costs for this visit were covered by a South Wales Pharmaceutical Company. Medicines had been purchased from them in January and on my return a director of the company, after coming to

see me, expressed a desire to see things for himself. Hence the second visit.

Local churches and individuals gave generously and so we were able to purchase and fill a trailer with medicines, medical aids, wool, silk, cottons and other supplies.

All the gifts were taken to a Christian-owned factory in Puscine, a small town north east of Zagreb. The Christian society in Croatia that distributes aid to refugees is called *Moj Bliznji (My Neighbour)*. Through the distribution of aid to the refugees a remarkable Christian witness is being made. Some of the Muslims attend the Baptist Church and seem to enjoy the two-hour services.

We visited hospitals and dispensaries. The doctors were very grateful for the antibiotics we gave to them especially medicines specifically for children. One Christian doctor said that they had been unable to pay their medical suppliers for



*Young people listening to song and testimony at Vareldin Camp*

six months and so no more supplies were available.

The Christians are active, zealous, and evangelising as much as they can. They are seeing a good response to the gospel. This testimony is powerfully supported by their evident and sincere concern for those in need, especially refugees.

Christians from several European countries visit or stay at the centre in Puscine. They work in the warehouse, take aid to the camps, and visit the elderly. There are various examples of practical help. One Swiss girl is teaching some ladies to knit using one of the church rooms.

Christian literature is widely distributed and many people write in for further

instruction and spiritual help. The church we visited has a weekly broadcast on the local radio. We were interviewed on the radio and by a reporter for the newspaper. The people are nominally Roman Catholic but many are eager to hear the gospel message.

Among agencies of relief are centres in Rotterdam and Hamburg from which container lorries are sent with supplies into Croatia.

If readers wish to have more information they are encouraged to write to:

*David Griffiths  
Emmanuel House  
Horton, Gower,  
West Glamorgan,  
SA3 1LB, UK.*

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## The Authorised Version – a revision

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*Brian Edwards, minister of Hook Evangelical Church, Surbiton, Surrey.*

When James I succeeded Elizabeth in 1603 he called a conference of leading churchmen and theologians at Hampton Court Palace to discuss 'things pretended to be amiss in the church'. The only result of this meeting worthy of note was the resolution 'that a translation be made of the whole Bible, as consonant as can be to the original Hebrew and Greek; and this to be set out and pointed [punctuated], without any marginal notes, and only to be used in all churches of England in time of divine service'.

This was the birth of the Authorised, or King James Version. In fact it was no more King James' than Coverdale's Bible was King Henry's, and it was never formally authorised by Parliament. But James was glad of any opportunity to get rid of the Geneva Bible with its notes which were, to his mind, far too Protestant and Reformed; after all, he was the son of Mary, Queen of Scots!

James arranged for six groups of translators to divide the work: three on the Old Testament, one on the Apocrypha, and two on the New Testament. Forty-seven scholars were chosen for the

work. The work was modelled on the Bishops' Bible and for this reason was in some respects a backward step from Geneva and those before it. The Authorised Version, which was completed in 1611, reintroduced words that had a loaded ecclesiastical meaning in pre-Reformation days. For example 'confess' was introduced in place of 'acknowledge', which appeared in both the Geneva Bible and in Tyndale's New Testament before it, 'charity' in place of 'love' and 'church' in place of 'congregation'. At John 10:16 the Authorised Version translators chose 'There shall be one fold and one shepherd,' which Westcott, years later, rightly called a 'disastrous' translation since it gave support to the Roman idea of one visible organised Church on earth; Tyndale had rightly translated by the word 'flock'. These may be small issues today, but for the strong supporters of the Geneva Bible they were seen as a drift back to the Church of Rome. In fact the translators were trying to steer a middle course, but whether or not they succeeded is a matter of opinion.

Certainly the Authorised Version was no stiff, word-by-word translation. At times it could be accused of being too free: for instance, in Romans 5:2-3 the same Greek word appears as 'rejoice', 'glory' and 'joy' within the space of

two verses. It is even open to the charge of paraphrasing: for example, in Matthew 27:44 the single Greek word 'revile' is rendered 'cast the same in his teeth', and Paul's expression, 'It cannot be' in Romans 6:15, for example, is paraphrased as 'God forbid', though we can blame Tyndale's 1526 New Testament for both these readings! In fact the Authorised Version, like all its predecessors, was heavily dependent upon Tyndale and, as we have already noted, fully ninety per cent of the Authorised Version New Testament is taken from Tyndale's 1534 revision. This is why, strictly, the Authorised Version is a revision and not a new translation.

Like every version before and after it, the Authorised Version did not lack critics, particularly from among those who were brought up on the Geneva Bible. The most vigorous critic was Dr Hugh Broughton, a recognised Hebrew and Greek scholar who was left out of the translation team possibly because of his abrasive character and because he was known to be working on his own revision of the Geneva Bible. Broughton hated the new translation and told the king so: 'The cockles of the sea shore, and the leaves of the forest, and the grains of the poppy, may as well be numbered as the gross errors of this Bible.' This charge is reminiscent of Bishop Tunstall who, within a few short months of Tyndale's New Testament arriving in this country, claimed to have found 3,000 errors within its pages. It is hard to be

an unprejudiced critic when we feel threatened!

In spite of Hugh Broughton, and the strong supporters of the Geneva Bible, the Authorised, or King James Version won its way into the hearts and minds of the people and remained at centre stage for the next three and a half centuries. At first the Apocrypha was bound in with it and in 1615 Archbishop Abbott forbade anyone to issue an edition without this inclusion. The Puritans objected, and the issue remained a lively one for many years; it is still possible to buy copies of the Authorised Version with the Apocrypha.

Because the English language has changed considerably since 1611 there has been a need for revision of the language of the Authorised Version over the years. In 1769 it was updated by a Dr Blayney, and the spelling of the 1611 edition would be oddly unreadable for a modern congregation. For instance 1 Corinthians 13 reads as follows:

5. *Doeth not behaue it selfe vnseemly, seeketh not her owne, is not easily prouoked, thinketh no euill,*
6. *Reioyceth not in iniquitie, but reioyceth in the trueth.*

This material has been extracted from the revised edition of Brian Edwards' book, *Nothing but the Truth* (see editorial).

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## John 3:16 and Hyper-Calvinism

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By selective use of Reformed Confessions it is possible to claim to be reformed but at the same time hide the fact that you are a hyper-Calvinist. The hyper-Calvinist denies that God loves all mankind and that the gospel is good news to be declared to all without exception. That is the very essence of hyper-Calvinism. Calvin, the great organiser of the evangelisation of France, writes on John 3:16: 'For although there is nothing in the world deserving God's favour, he nevertheless shows he is favourable to the whole world when he calls all without exception to the faith of Christ.'

Rev H Hoeksema, in a booklet entitled *The Gospel*, denies that the gospel can be offered since fallen man is unable to repent. Hoeksema says that the promise of the gospel is not given to all but only to the seed of Abraham (that is, to the elect).

It is typical of hyper-Calvinism to rationalise. By rationalising I mean that the hyper takes the doctrine of total depravity and reasons that because man's will is crippled by the fall it is futile to offer the gospel. Moreover it cannot be sincere of God to offer the gospel to all if he does not intend to save all. In other words this rationalisation effectively emasculates the gospel so that it is not good news for the sinner at all.

It is impossible for the hyper to proclaim the love of God for sinners. What he can proclaim is that out there in the world are God's elect and God loves them but he hates the rest! That is hardly good news!

The good news is that God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that all who believe in him should not perish but have eternal life. Rightly did Calvin understand that it is this fallen, perishing world that God loved.

The gospel that came to me as a sinner was the gospel of God's love, that he loved me and found no pleasure that I should perish in hell. The good news was conditional. To be saved I had to repent and believe on Christ. That I had to do my very self. But in the event I could not because of my slavery to sin, yet I knew that to be saved I would have to repent and believe. There was only one thing to do and that was to look to Christ to do for me, and in me, what I could not do myself. When I looked to him in my hopeless state he saved me. Hallelujah! It was the love of God for lost sinners that drew me. It was the love of God that held before me Christ, crucified on the cross for me. The exact order of John chapter three applied: God's love for sinners and God's love expressed in the cross for sinners.

This is the love of God that we must take to all without exception. The conditions must be set before all sinners that to be saved they must repent and believe. If they discover the enormity of their sinful depravity then let them not despair. Point them to Christ. Do what the Methodist preacher did to the young Spurgeon when he exhorted him personally from the text from Isaiah: 'Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God and there is no other' (Is 45:22).

### **We accept truth by faith not human reason**

The problem both with the Arminian and the hyper-Calvinist is that they rationalise according to human reason. The Arminian reasons that the sinner can of himself do whatever God commands. Therefore he believes that man has free will. The hyper does the same but rationalises in a different way. He reasons that because man is enslaved in his will, it is inconsistent for the Lord to offer him something that he has not the power to respond to. Can we who follow Calvin and the Puritans help Arminians and hyperts?

It is much easier to help Arminians because most of them have not been faced with the doctrine of the fall and of election. I used to be a rabid Arminian. Hyperts are more difficult to help because they tend to entrench themselves in their human rationalisation. But some have been delivered from that. The hyper-Calvinist (*Standard Bearer* group) in Northern Ireland referred to in *RT 132* cannot endure the word antinomy used by Jim Packer in his book *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*. They cannot abide it and call it poison! This is not surprising because it challenges them to renounce their rationalisation. Since I believe in common grace and the love of God for all mankind I am called an Arminian by them. I am honoured to be placed in the company of John Calvin, Jim Packer, Prof John Murray, Dr Lloyd-Jones and the Puritans all of whom decline the rationalistic constrictions of hyperism. It might help to point to the fact that there are a number of subjects concerning God that are above human rationalisation as we read in Isaiah:

*As the heavens are higher than the earth,  
So are my ways above your ways  
and my thoughts above your thoughts,  
declares the LORD*

Herman Bavinck in his book *The Doctrine of God*<sup>1</sup> begins his monumental study of the names and attributes of God by considering the fact that God is both knowable and unknowable. We can applaud him for his discernment. That certainly is the correct place to begin.

We must stress the knowability of God because to know him in the personal way of being reconciled to him and loving him is to enjoy eternal life, as Jesus said: 'Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus

Christ, whom you have sent' (Jn 17:3). We may know God extensively and comprehensively according to all that he has revealed of himself in Holy Scripture.

### **Does God have Feelings?**

Yet there are ways in which we cannot know God. We are finite and he is infinite. He is eternal and we are created. He is immutable and we are subject to change. There are some issues we can never fully grasp. We simply accept them. One such subject is the Trinity.<sup>3</sup> Another difficult issue which soars above us is what theologians call the impassibility of God. God in his divine being cannot suffer in the way that we do. He is not physical. He cannot be overcome with surprise. He is not subject to moods and passions. Are we to conclude that God is devoid of emotion or feeling? What are we to make of the statement, 'God is love'?

Surely we are to understand by God's love everything that constitutes true love, including emotion and feeling. There is no such thing as love which does not feel. Love as expressed in the Scripture is a love which comes from all the heart, that is all the affections. Yet how can an impassible God have feeling? This feeling is not confined to love. We read in Scripture that wrath is being treasured up against the day of wrath (Rom 2:5). This wrath must be conceived of in terms of controlled feeling. We know that God loves and hates, and loves and hates in a way we can understand. Yet at the same time he loves and hates in a way which is peculiar to himself, that is in a way which does not deny his immutability as God. Details of this subject transcend our ability to grasp. God is at one and the same time both knowable and unknowable.

A similar problem confronts us with God's love for sinners. How can he love and hate sinners at the same time? 'You hate all who do wrong' (Ps 5:5). At the same time we read, 'But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners Christ died for us.' The stress is on the fact that while we were sinners we were loved. This is not because we were better sinners or meritorious sinners. The text does not say that God loved us because he saw he could do something with us to make us attractive. We were children of wrath but at the same time we were loved. And God *so* loved us that he gave his one and only Son for us.

Righteous hatred and love mingle in our hearts at the same time. We are not permitted to hate with the hatred of vengeance. Vengeance belongs to God (Rom 12:19). It is not too much for us to believe that God contains within himself all that goes to make up perfect love and perfect hatred. We know that is so, but how it is so is unknowable. And it does not matter because we are required to believe, not to rationalise.

God loathes the wicked in their detestable, sinful practices (Ez 18:10-13). At the same time he says: 'Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked?' declares

the sovereign LORD. 'Rather am I not pleased when they turn from their ways and live?' Moab deserved severe judgment. Her destruction as a nation was decreed yet at the same time the LORD declared, 'Therefore I wail over Moab, for all Moab I cry out... So my heart laments for Moab like a flute; it laments like a flute for the men of Kir Hareseth' (Jer 48:31,36).<sup>3</sup> Jesus wept bitterly over lost sinners of Jerusalem (Lk 19:41). Being filled with his love we weep over lost sinners.<sup>3</sup>

How then does God both hate and at the same time sorrow like a heartbreaking, mournful melody played on a flute? According to the hyper God only loves the elect and hates the non-elect. Hypers cannot take John 3:16 and say that God loves the fallen sinful world, that is, loves sinners as sinners. A hyper cannot say to a sinner, 'God loves you and wishes you to be saved and he has so loved you that he has given his only begotten Son that you might not perish but have eternal life.' We note well that John 3:16 does not say, for God so loved *the elect*. The Holy Spirit did not write the text that way. Are we to understand that 'the world' here means both Jews and Gentiles? The word 'world' must be interpreted in the way it is used throughout the Gospel, namely, all people without exception not all people without distinction. In John's Gospel the Jews do not stand in contrast to the world. The world is that whole world into which Jesus came, that world which did not recognise him (Jn 1:10).

I conclude by drawing attention to that little word *so*. 'God *so* (Greek *houtōs*) loved the world.' What a glory there is in that word *so*. We find the same word in 1 John 4:11, 'Beloved, if God *so* loved us.' How we could be so loved is as mysterious as it is wonderful. The word *so* fills the text with the sunshine of heaven and fills our hearts with wonder, love and praise. It fills our souls with a desire to tell the whole world of that great and marvellous love of God for lost sinners. 'Love so amazing, so divine demands my life, my soul, my all!'

## References

- <sup>1</sup> Bavinck, *The Doctrine of God*, translated by William Hendriksen, 403 pages, Eerdmans, 1951, Banner of Truth, 1977).
- <sup>2</sup> Andrew King told us at the Carey Family Conference of a conversation he had with a Muslim. The Muslim said that part of his religion was belief in the transcendence of God. Andrew responded by asking his Muslim friend if he was prepared to accept the Christian doctrine of the Trinity since that truth also belongs to the transcendent. We can understand it yet we cannot. We know yet we do not know. God is transcendent.
- <sup>3</sup> Further proof that God loves sinners can be found by engaging in a word study of the Hebrew word *hesed* (loving-kindness) which occurs almost 250 times in the Old Testament.



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# Why Should The Devil Have All The Good Tunes?

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Terry A Yount

Imagine sitting in a church meditating on God's holiness. Then before the sermon a young woman sings, holding her microphone to her lips as luscious string accompaniment emerges from hidden speakers. All eyes are drawn to her face, now focused upward on a particularly high note. Your mind wanders to various subjects as you notice others struggling to see her as a person ministering to the body of Christ, not just performing. Several young men have bowed their heads. This is not an uncommon scenario in evangelical churches, this mixture of worship and entertainment, of spirituality and sensuality. Should it go unquestioned?

Luther has been quoted as saying, 'Why should the devil have all the good tunes?' A musician himself as well as a leader of the Protestant Reformation in Germany, he used popular melodies to encourage the emerging church in Germany, as well as to teach great doctrines of the faith in the people's language. Tunes like *Ein'feste Burg* have today become standards. Who would have thought that 'A Mighty Fortress is our God' started out as a simple dance-like pop song?

Since the sixteenth century, however, popular music has taken various forms,

not all of them appropriate for Christian worship. To condemn or stigmatise all popular music as unfit for Christian worship would be to deny Luther, Calvin, Knox, Wesley, Moody and many others some of their most ingenious 'borrowing' of current tunes.

On the other hand, should choices that affect the spiritual lives of entire congregations be left to pop music producers? Unbelievably, the musical taste in many churches is largely determined by the pop music business. Rather than develop biblically sound criteria (something Luther would have insisted on), our churches have abdicated on musical preference, opting for that of a band of commercial troubadors.

How has this happened? In the absence of solid teaching from the average pulpit on the matter of appropriate music in worship, many have formed their own preferences. 'Contemporary' Christian mixes, country, pop, rock, blues, gospel, jazz and even classical styles for the over thirty set - with varying quality. When confronted with objections to Christian rock, our young people recoil and turn up their Walkmans.

The problem goes deeper. When the church refuses to set standards for its worship, it sends a message to the watching world about content and

integrity. Worship, that delicate balance between spirit and truth, sobriety and ecstasy, form and function, is the pulse of healthy, growing congregations. From worship radiate fellowship, personal spiritual growth, community witness and world evangelism. But what happens when worship becomes a forum for extremes going from mindless tradition to what can only be described as entertainment? The result is usually dependency, conformity and musical mediocrity.

The Bible speaks clearly enough to these issues. Ask these questions about musical content in your church's worship:

1. Is the music, in all its elements (rhythm, harmony, melody, texture, performance) essentially free of strong worldly associations?
2. Does the text (if present) agree with sound doctrine?
3. Have the musicians spent time in prayer as well as technical preparation?
4. Does the combination of music and words conform to the 'true, noble, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, praiseworthy, criteria of Philippians 4:8?

If we care about corporate worship's music, we will demand that our pulpits clear up the issues for contemporary Christians. We will not relinquish authority in musical choices to self-proclaimed experts or pop artists, no matter how sincere. We will demand that our colleges teach a biblical perspective on music instead of

allowing them to promote the status quo. We will encourage our seminaries who rarely offer musical training and then only skimpily, to train pastors, evangelists and missionaries in musical discernment.

What we really have in the modern evangelical community is a fool's compromise between earth and heaven. We equate self-actualisation with spiritual renewal and then claim rebirth. We manipulate the masses by coddling them in worship with 'contemporary' Christian music and fail to confront them with the necessity to think as well as to feel.

Luther's concern for 'good tunes' rightly points to the world as our frequent source. But oh, how he would chide us for becoming too friendly with the 'devil's tunes' when we can do better.

If we ever have *truly* contemporary Christian music and not some warmed-over current pop fare, it will reveal a powerful Christ who balances spiritual fervour (not raw sensuality) with biblical truth. He will need no studio-sanctuaries with mixing boards and taped backups. He will confront souls through humble, sacrificial servants — not media gurus and slick marketing departments. And the 'devil's tunes', while occasionally useful, will be exposed for the counterfeits they were all along.

*Dr Terry Yount, in addition to serving as Adjunct Professor of Music at Washington Bible College, is organist for the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, and co-director of the Greater Washington Music Academy.*

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**Editor**  
**Associate Editors**

ERROLL HULSE, 75 Woodhill Road, Leeds LS16 7BZ  
DAVID KINGDON, UK, JIM VAN ZYL, SA  
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**Matthew Brennan**

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