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# REFORMATION TODAY



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Pictured above is Dr R Albert Mohler, president of the Southern Baptist Seminary speaking to pastor Bill Ascol of Shreveport. Southern Baptist in Louisville is the oldest SB seminary and one of the largest in the world. Dr Mohler trained at Southern himself, earning a PhD in systematic and historical theology, following that with doctoral study at Oxford University (England). He has served as a pastor in Southern Baptist churches and been active as a writer. His materials have been cited in the leading newspapers of America including *The Wall Street Journal* and *The New York Times*. Dr Mohler loves the writings of the Reformers and the Puritans and stands in the tradition of J P Boyce, the founder of the seminary and of C H Spurgeon. He has specialised in the subject of the authenticity of the gospel in our post-Christian culture, which subject he has agreed to present at the coming Carey Ministers' Conference, 4-6 January 1995.

## Carey Family Conference 1994

25-30 July 1994 – Bolney, West Sussex

**Guest speaker – David Straub, RBMS**

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*Front cover: Douglas Walker, dean of students at Southern Seminary, Louisville, is pictured beside a portrait of J P Boyce, founder of the seminary. Born into a prominent South Carolina family in 1827, Boyce trained at Brown University and at Princeton Theological Seminary. He was pastor of the First Baptist Church, Columbia, before becoming a seminary professor at Furman Theological Institute and one of four founders of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville. Boyce's most useful writing is his 496 page 'Abstract of Systematic Theology'. Boyce died in France in 1888.*

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## Editorial

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Featured above is the library of Southern Baptist Seminary which is only one of several capacious, handsome buildings which adorn the campus of Southern Seminary. J P Boyce (see page opposite) endowed the seminary library with 5,000 volumes.

The erosion of our Christian heritage, widespread spiritual indifference and decline into secularism is to be observed as much in America as it is in Britain. Such negative factors are offset by encouraging signs of upgrade by way of outstanding evangelical leadership exemplified in men like John MacArthur who has a nationwide impact in the USA and also by some signs of an upgrade in the Southern Baptist Convention, purportedly the largest evangelical denomination in the world. A survey in which sixteen informed individuals from the SBC answered detailed question-

naires concluded that Calvinism is on the rise in the Convention.

However it is the steady increase in godly pastors throughout the world who serve faithfully and who preach the whole counsel of God even where the ground is hard and growth is slow, that must be our best encouragement, especially where there is substantial reformation and consolidation in the truth.

The Puritan movement in Britain represented a gradual numerical increase of godly pastors and churches from 1558 to the time of the Great Ejection in 1662. Surely we should pray earnestly that the present world-wide Reformed movement will have similar effects providing the theological stability and doctrinal maturity which is essential as a foundation for revival.

## **Reformation in Argentina**

The valuable description of the history of the church in the Argentine (32 million) by Trevor Routley highlights the urgent need of reformation in that country. It would be fascinating to have similar histories for other Spanish-speaking countries such as Mexico (96 million), Peru (24 million), Venezuela (21 million), Columbia (34 million), Bolivia (8 million) and Chile (13 million).

The Reformed movement in the English-speaking world has been brought about mostly by literature. Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones is the most popular Reformed author in Portuguese-speaking Brazil. The example set by leaders in Brazil could offer a pattern for reformation in the Spanish-speaking nations of central and South America. A concerted effort is being made to establish a Reformed fraternal in Buenos Aires.

There is a great need for a Reformed magazine in Spanish. Those who pray for reformation desire that Spanish-speaking pastors in the Americas should cooperate to see what action can be taken. It is the gospel itself which is at stake. The shallowness which prevails generally in Argentina is so severe that the biblical gospel is hardly recognisable.

## **The Church of England**

The Church of England as we know it has always been comprehensive. This is illustrated by the inclusion of Anglo-Catholic High Churchmen who believe in the mass as well as arch-liberals like former Bishop David Jenkins. The latter has been notorious for his rejection of

the virgin birth and the physical resurrection of Christ. Many Anglicans think this diversity is advantageous. Also included in the Anglican fold are a tiny number of Anglicans of Reformed persuasion. Their influence has been negligible. As Reg Burrows explains, now that the ordination of women has been accepted, the position of evangelicals has become untenable. Presbyterianism seems the only viable option for seceding Anglicans. Presbyterian churches in England number only about seven.

## **The difference between ruling elders and full-time pastors**

This is a subject of great practical importance to churches of all denominations. The extent to which it has been debated and analysed is evident from 14 chapters of real quality brought together in a book with the title *Order in the Offices* edited by Mark R Brown. Iain Murray provides an historical overview from 1827 onwards, dealing with how the distinction between ministers and ruling elders has been justified from Scripture. He describes the views of Samuel Miller, Dabney, Thornwell, Hodge, Smyth and Thomas Witherow. Of all the writers Smyth was the most detailed. His catechism on the subject of Church government is included. There is also a chapter describing his life. Jeffrey K Boer describes Calvin's view of the teaching elder and the ruling elder. A twenty page annotated bibliography completes a fine book available in the UK at £10.95 plus postage from EP, 12 Wooler Street, Darlington, DL1 1RQ or in the USA from Classic Presbyterian Government Resources, 807 Peachdale Lane, Duncansville, PA 16635.

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## The Sufficiency of Scripture

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Bob Sheehan

Imagine a religious discussion between a traditional Roman Catholic, a Jehovah's Witness, a Pentecostal and a Reformed Christian on the doctrine of Scripture. If true to their respective traditions, each would affirm Scripture as inspired, infallible and inerrant. But what would happen when the discussion turned to the sufficiency of Scripture: the doctrine that Scripture *alone* teaches us what to believe and do?

The traditional Roman Catholic could not accept Scripture as the only teacher without adding to it the interpretations decreed by the Church. The Jehovah's Witness could not accept Scripture without the interpretive publications of the Watchtower Society. Scripture through the eyes of Rome or Brooklyn would be acceptable but not Scripture *alone*.

The Pentecostal brother would loudly assert the sufficiency of Scripture alone but his Reformed friend would raise at least one eye-brow when he remembered all those dreams, visions and prophecies by which his activities were ruled! Tentatively, he might suggest to his Pentecostal brother that in asserting the sufficiency of Scripture he actually meant that Scripture was the *ultimate* authority but not the *only* authority. This, increasing numbers of Pentecostals would affirm.

In the discussion group our Reformed brother would find himself alone on this issue. Indeed, the sufficiency of Scripture is *the* line of demarcation not just between Reformed evangelicals and non-evangelicals but between Reformed evangelicals and many other evangelicals. A difference here is major. It determines the shape and content of our whole theology. In this two-part article we will be looking at the doctrine and some of its implications.

Before they met Jesus, the apostles, as Jews, had the Holy Scripture of the Old Testament. During his earthly ministry Christ taught them all that they could absorb at that time. At his ascension he sent them his Holy Spirit to remind them of all that he had taught them and to lead them into all truth.

'All truth' was not everything that they wanted to know, but everything that Christ wanted them to know, and which they needed to know, to please God. All truth is the truth in all its parts, the whole body of redemptive truth.

While the apostles lived they passed on this truth by preaching and writing. It was natural, however, that people would begin to be fearful about what would happen to the

truth after their demise. Timid people like Timothy were particularly concerned. For this reason, Paul wrote his last and most reassuring letter to him, directing him away from the timidity and showing him where to look for all truth once the apostles were gone.<sup>1</sup>

### **The Scriptures: the depository of all truth (2 Timothy 3:14-17)**

From infancy Timothy had been taught the 'sacred writings' (v15). Paul did not use the usual term for Scripture here but a term in common use among the Jews to describe the Old Testament, and found on a number of occasions in the writings of Josephus. Timothy was encouraged to continue in the sacred writings, the Scriptures, which are a Christ-revealing book.<sup>2</sup>

From the Old Testament Scriptures, Paul turned Timothy's attention to 'all Scripture' (v16), using the more familiar term. Many have wanted to make the 'sacred writings' and 'all Scripture' co-extensive. Sometimes this is with the aim of asserting that it was impossible that in the apostles' lifetimes their writings could have been regarded as Scripture. However, not only is it clear that Paul refers to Luke's Gospel, and Peter refers to Paul's letters, as Scripture<sup>3</sup> but there is no necessary improbability in their so doing for it is clear that the apostles considered their writings to have special authority and expected their readers to recognise the fact. For this reason, there is no surprise that in the days after the apostles, the churches had no difficulty in treating the apostolic writings as of equal authority to the Old Testament because the apostles and their readers did this themselves.

Far from wanting to identify the 'sacred writings' and 'all Scripture', Paul uses the expression 'sacred writings' in v15, but 'all Scripture' in v16, in order to draw a distinction between the Old Testament and whatever has a right to be called divinely-inspired Scripture. The latter includes more than the former.

Timothy must pay attention not merely to the Old Testament, with which he had been familiar since childhood, but to all Scripture. For all Scripture, whether the Old Testament, or the Gospels, or the Epistles, were God-breathed and profitable to teach, rebuke, correct and instruct in righteousness, in all that is pleasing to God (v16).

How adequate is all Scripture to teach and guide in the things that please God? Timothy is told that all Scripture is profitable so that the man of God might be complete (Greek *artios* v17). This word, used only here in the New Testament has the meaning elsewhere of 'suitable', 'correct' or 'normal'. The idea in this passage is that the man of God is made able to meet all the demands of the situation. The Scriptures 'tool up' a man for the work of pleasing God.

This word is followed by a related verb in an intensive form (*exertismenos*). This word gives our English 'exertion'. The man of God is equipped or 'fitted out' for his work.

The Scriptures ‘tool up’ and ‘fit out’ a man for the work of pleasing God. They provide the information he needs to believe and obey in order to serve God.

Are the Scriptures partially or totally adequate for this task? Paul was in no doubt and wrote dogmatically and unequivocally. The Scriptures ‘tool up’ and ‘fit out’ the man of God for **every** good work (v17).

To be good a work has to proceed from faith, be commanded by God and be done for his glory. The Scriptures teach a man what God requires of him. There is no doctrine which needs to be believed, or duty which needs to be fulfilled, about which Scripture does not give us adequate information to enable us to believe and obey God.

In his teaching to Timothy, Paul was establishing the same principle as that which came into effect when the succession of Old Testament prophets ceased and the inter-testamental period began. At the end of the Old Testament period the word of God no longer came through the voice of man but in the written word. The demise of the apostles brought about that situation again. Just as the truth once revealed through Moses, the prophets and their wise men of old was deposited in the Old Testament Scriptures, so the truth revealed through Christ, the apostles and prophets of the New Testament age was deposited in the New Testament.

### **Once the apostolic voice was silenced ‘all truth’ was not lost but was found in ‘all Scripture’**

Failure to appreciate this was a disastrous mistake for the churches in the centuries that followed the apostles. Although they made appeal to a two-fold witness of the Old Testament and the testimony of the apostles, they failed to limit this witness to the written testimony of the apostles and accepted a tradition passed on and preserved by the Church. Soon greater significance began to be attached to this tradition than to the apostolic Scriptures, and the churches slid into captivity to the authority of church tradition and ultimately to that tradition as interpreted in Rome by the Pope.

It was the glory of the Protestant Reformation to dethrone the Pope, the Roman Church and tradition and to reassert the authority of God’s Word. ‘The Reformers’ whole understanding of Christianity depended on the principle of *Sola Scriptura*: that is the view that the Scripture, as the *only* Word of God in this world, is the *only* guide for conscience and the Church, the *only* source of true knowledge of God and grace, and the *only* qualified judge of the Church’s testimony and teaching, past and present.<sup>74</sup>

If the Scriptures are the only teacher of what we need to believe and obey to please God, what are the implications of this doctrine and how may it be put into practice?

## The implications of sufficiency for continuing prophecy

As the Scriptures teach us all we need to know to please God, we have no need of continuing prophecy. The inter-testamental Jews did not need prophecy when they had the Old Testament Scriptures. We do not need prophecy now we have the New Testament Scriptures.

This conclusion has always been resisted by some, and never more so than in the modern world. Some have wanted to encourage continuing prophecy. In support of this they argue that although the inter-testamental Jews did not have prophecy in its full Old Testament sense, they did affirm the existence of revelatory phenomena of a supernatural sort in the inter-testamental period.

The 'revelatory phenomena' are not without their difficulties. There is a great hesitancy and uncertainty even among those who produce this evidence. They are not sure whether these revelatory phenomena should be called 'prophecy' or 'quasi-prophetic activity' or 'a sort of prophetic sense'. They concur in recognising that these phenomena were inferior to the prophecy found in the Old Testament and have to concede that there is no certainty that they actually occurred. This hesitancy and uncertainty should be weighed.

Further we must ask whether it logically follows that because some inter-testamental Jews believed that some quasi-prophetic activity of inferior quality occurred among them in spite of the cessation of Old Testament prophecy and the close of the canon of Old Testament Scripture, that we should accept continuance of New Testament prophecy? Especially we should note that, whatever some Jews did or did not believe, our Lord saw 'the prophets and law prophesying until John'<sup>5</sup> and nothing else. For him, the written Word prophesied not the quasi-prophetic revelatory phenomena!

However, the advocates of continuing prophecy insist that it must continue because they argue there is no indication in the New Testament that it would cease. Is there not?

Does not Paul tell us that the Church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets?<sup>6</sup> It will not do to interpret these prophets as Old Testament prophets because in the Ephesian Epistle Paul draws a contrast between the truth revealed in past ages and that which is **now** (in the first century) revealed to his apostles and prophets.<sup>7</sup> These prophets are New Testament prophets, and with the apostles, are the foundation of the Church, not part of its continuing ministry.

Various attempts are made to undermine the significance of this passage. It is argued that it is not the apostles and prophets as persons which are in view but their teaching. Their doctrine is the foundation on which the Church is built. However, a study of the context of Ephesians 2:20 makes it clear that the 'building' being described consists of people only: the Ephesians (who were predominantly Gentiles), the Jewish believers, Christ, the apostles and the prophets. A sudden change from people to doctrine would be a violent destruction of the whole picture.



Others argue that the Greek of Ephesians 2:20 ought to be translated 'the apostles who are prophets', thus making the apostles alone foundational and enabling a continuing ministry of prophets. Now such a translation, while possible, is not necessary and is ruled out by the wider context of Ephesians. In his list of Christ's gifts to the Church Paul clearly distinguishes prophets from apostles. Are we to argue that what is distinguished in chapter 4 is confused and mingled in chapters 2 and 3?<sup>8</sup> Surely not!

The New Testament prophets with the New Testament apostles are the foundation on which the church is built, not part of a still-being-erected superstructure. Apostolic-prophetic ministries of the spoken Word have given way to apostolic-prophetic teaching of the written Scripture.

### **The implications of sufficiency for dreams**

The Scriptures undoubtedly teach that God used dreams to reveal his will to his people, and sometimes even to the heathen in the days of the Old Testament and in the apostolic age.<sup>9</sup> The arrival of 'all Scripture', however, makes revelatory dreams unnecessary.

Inevitably strong objection is made to such a statement by those who profess to have God-given dreams, and their claims need analysis and response.

What causes dreams? Let me suggest and illustrate five causes:

#### *1. God's revelatory activity*

Revelatory dreams were such an important part of prophetic experiences that even the false prophets knew they had to claim to have had a dream if their claim to be prophets was to be considered credible.<sup>10</sup> However, having 'all truth' we no longer need such continuing revelation by dreams.

#### *2. Satan's hostile attacks*

In his suffering Job complained about the fact that he had experienced terrible torment through dreams.<sup>11</sup> Although Job blamed God for these dreams, we remember that he did not have the insight which we have into Job 1-2 to know that, in fact, he had been handed over to the attacks of Satan. A natural phenomenon such as dreams can be used by Satan to cause us to wake distressed and oppressed. We need to ask God to protect us in our sleeping as well as our waking thoughts.

#### *3. Natural causes*

The story is told of a lady who asked a preacher to interpret a dream which she described in some detail and with some degree of spiritual pride. He gave her the following withering explanation, 'Too much cucumber in your sandwich before going to bed!'

Some dreams, even those which seem so very special, are able to be explained on the basis of purely natural causes. A full stomach or unwise eating can cause troublesome dreams. Of course, it is more 'spiritual' to attribute our dreams to God than to cucumber, but not necessarily more accurate!

#### 4. *Preceding thoughts and anxieties*

How often my mother would tell me as a child that she had gone to bed thinking about all the washing that needed to be done next day and had dreamt that she had done it. Waking up made clear the dreadful reality! It had only been a dream.

The worries, burdens, anxieties, joys and anticipations which fill the mind before sleep can often recur in the mind during sleep. Therefore, spiritual thoughts may create spiritual dreams without these being revelatory or in any special sense 'from God'.

#### 5. *God's activity in providence*

God is very merciful to us and often has given special help to those whose faith is weak and faltering.<sup>12</sup> Sometimes when a person is worried about something, God superintends the thoughts of their sleeping minds in such a way so as to give them peace rather than anxiety. Some people, who have been struggling with assurance of salvation, have had their anguished hearts stilled by a dream. That God mercifully provides such dreams by ordering our thoughts to suit our needs cannot be denied, but we should neither call such an experience 'revelation' nor should we rely on it. It is as if the sides of a wound were being held together to stop bleeding, a temporary expedient, until better, more secure treatment can be found.

C H Spurgeon wisely counselled a lady who was assured of her salvation through such a dream that although the dream may have been of use to her in doing her good she should not really rely on it. A more solid ground for assurance should be sought in the teaching that the Scriptures give and the marks of the saved which they reveal. The tests of life given in 1 John are more reliable than a dream which could have multiple causes, only one of which may be God. *The certainties of Scripture should be trusted rather than the uncertainties of dreams.*

*The article will be concluded in the next issue.*

#### References

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|---|-------------------------------|
| 1 1 Tim 4:12; 2 Tim 1:7-8; 2:1  | 6 Eph 2:20                    |
| 2 Luke 24:27,44,45; 2 Tim 3:15  | 7 Eph 3:4f                    |
| 3 1 Tim 5:18; 2 Pet 3:16  | 8 Eph 4:11; 2:20; 3:5         |
| 4 Packer J I in Montgomery J W (1974)<br>God's Inerrant Word, Bethany Fellowship, pp48-49 | 9 Num 12:6; Acts 2:17         |
| 5 Matt 11:13  | 10 Num 12:6; Jer 23:25-28     |
|   | 11 Job 7:14                   |
|   | 12 Judg 7:9-15; John 20:26-28 |

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# Church Planting

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*An interview with Pastor Howard Mason of Park Evangelical Church, Stoke-on-Trent.*

*Editor: I have observed that your congregation is about the same size for morning (about 130) and evening (about 60) services as it was two years ago but allowance must be made for a subtraction of about 20 due to your church planting enterprise.*

**Howard:** Yes, five families are involved in a new work at Hookgate about ten miles from our church in Stoke-on-Trent.

*It is necessary to have complete unity and no rivalry in the leadership to have success in church planting. Could you comment on that?*

The work began about two years ago with the elders suggesting a monthly Bible study in the area where these five families came from. This group found a great degree of unity together and under the leadership of the elders considered the possibility of church planting.

This was not an easy decision as almost all those involved were key workers at Park Church. We have kept the whole church involved at all stages so that from its very beginning it was the work of the local church and not a small group within it.



*Albert, Jenny and Daniel Bisson. Albert is due to begin his studies at Reformed Theological Seminary, Jackson, Mississippi in August this year*

*What about a place to meet?*

The Methodists have cooperated with the Independent Methodists who have recently closed down a chapel and were willing to rent it to us for £1,800 per annum. This we felt to be beyond our resources as we had to spend about £2,500 on refurbishment. Finally, after much prayer they agreed to a free rent for the first year and £500 for the second year. We saw this as a confirming seal from the Lord.

*How many meetings are there?*

They meet on Sunday mornings and fortnightly during the week for prayer and Bible study. They continue at Park Church for the remainder of our church meetings.

*Has prayer been a priority in this new work?*

Prayer has been at the heart of this work from beginning to end. Not only at church prayer meetings but in numerous prayer groups that meet during the week in people's homes.

*What about leadership?*

Because the group does not yet have the status of a church, but is only a fellowship of believers, it is directed by a steering committee which is chaired by myself. The committee consists of the elders, representatives from the Hookgate fellowship and Park Church. A subcommittee from those involved at Hookgate was set up to deal with the practical day to day organising. It is hoped that with the Lord's blessing, elders will be appointed, a membership established and a true gospel church founded.

*What about maintaining a high standard of preaching?*

We felt it vital that from the beginning there should be gospel centred, expository ministry. One of the Hookgate fellowship previously preached at Park with growing usefulness and ability. He had just retired from the police force and was asked if he would undertake to preach three times each month. This has worked out very well and the fellowship report much blessing upon the Word.

We believe that it is preferable that there be two elders to lead. We have not recognised elders in the new work yet but as things are going it seems certain that two will be recognised. One is the retired policeman

mentioned above. His gifts of preaching and pastoring have developed well.

*What about evangelism - what forms of outreach are being used?*

We have publicised the work in the local newspapers and village magazines and visited homes in the immediate area of the new work. However, we find that it is imperative that there be a welcoming, hospitable spirit in the assembly and a willingness on the part of the Hookgate members themselves to go out and visit the homes of those who come in.

*What about the finance?*

Park Church undertakes all the finances of Hookgate and so all giving is directed to Park Church. There is no collection at Hookgate, nor at Park to come to that! The total expenditure is about £20 a week for heating and literature.

*Has there been any success in this new work?*

Yes, under the Lord's blessing we have seen a number of local people attend the Sunday morning service and numbers are generally between 30 to 40. These are still early days but those who come in are proving very regular.

*What about discouragements? We know the spiritual climate is one of lack of interest. Surely there have been hard times in this new venture?*

We have to say that we have not known of any discouragements. On the contrary, 'the Lord has done great things for us and we are glad'. Being realistic I am sure they will come, but the Hookgate group consists of many mature Christians and there is much emphasis on prayer and caring for one another.

*Do you have any firm views about ideal distance of a new work from the mother church?*

I prefer that there be a clearly marked area or parish for a new work, taking into account other viable evangelical churches, as we need to concentrate on those areas of the country that are neglected. As long as the area is a clearly demarcated one I do not have strong views about that. In our instance the families who formed the first nucleus lived locally to the new vicinity. At all events, unity in the work is essential.

*When do you think the new church should be fully independent?*

The new work will be under the oversight of Park Church until elders are appointed and the work becomes well established and able to cope. This may take anything from two to five years depending on growth.

*What if the new work fails to grow?*

We have organised our church life so that if this work fails, those involved will still find it possible to return to home base. At present they join us for our Sunday evening service and for



*Provident Chapel, Hookgate, Loggerheads, Market Drayton*

two midweek prayer meetings each month.

*What is the doctrinal basis of the new church?*

We have agreed the same doctrinal basis as Park Church which is best described as conservative evangelical. I hold to the Reformed faith and through expository preaching the doctrines of grace are regularly taught. Almost all who form our membership have come to that position.

*Surely by not having a confessional basis of faith such as the 1689 Confession, you lay the church open to deviation in the future and so imperil it? You are not like C H Spurgeon who built for posterity by basing the Metropolitan Tabernacle, as well as the churches planted from the Tabernacle, on the 1689.*

I see the value of having such a Confession for church leaders, but from a pragmatic point of view I think that many of our members who now

believe the Reformed faith passionately would not have come in initially if we had been aggressively 'Reformed'. We do not wish merely to attract 'Reformed' people, but rather to bring in all sorts who under the Word can come to see for themselves its power and attractiveness. Yes, I suppose that is dangerous, but if we also teach the essentials of love and unity together in the things of first importance we have found it to work and I do not know of a more happy and united church.

*You have been the pastor at Stoke for 20 years, assisted in recent years by Albert Bisson, who is about to leave for three years of full-time study at Reformed Theological Seminary, Jackson, Mississippi. You have a large flock of 80 members to care for and general oversight of the new work. How do you keep yourself in a vital spiritual frame?*

Prayer with particular individuals within the church is very helpful. The church is very supportive and caring for myself and my family, which makes the task much easier. Also,

many within the church fellowship are as committed as anyone can be to the work, so their labour of love is a constant source of encouragement. Many exercise a pastoral ministry which makes the work much lighter.

I play squash twice a week in the winter and go wind-surfing during the summer on my day off. Although I do not normally enjoy reading like some people do, a good Christian book can often stimulate me into renewed study of the Word.

*What is your hope for the future?*

To be found faithful when the Lord comes. I don't have any great ambitions or plans for the church as we approach the 21st century. The first ten years of what seemed to me like barrenness have punctured any balloons I might have had. But we do long and pray for the conversion of one Muslim family in our area. We would also like to see a greater work being done among the students at Staffordshire University, of whom there are now very many living around our church.

## **NEW RT SUBSCRIPTION AGENT FOR UK & EUROPE**

Please send subscriptions to *Reformation Today*, c/o Stan Thompson, 200, Appley Lane North, Appley Bridge, Wigan WN6 9DY, UK

Stan Thompson is an active member of the Parbold Evangelical Church with whom we will be working in partnership in the practical administration of the magazine.

*Reformation Today* was constituted a Charitable Trust in January, 1993. John Palmer, pastor of Parbold, is one of the Trustees along with Bill James, Erroll Hulse and Lyn Hulse all from UK, and from America, Tom Nettles and Earl Blackburn.

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# A Brief History of the Church in Argentina

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*Trevor Routley*

In 1818, Buenos Aires was no more than a rudimentary population on the banks of the River Plate, known by travellers for its muddy streets, raised walkways and fleas. Argentina was still struggling toward a sense of nationhood having officially declared its independence from Spain only two years before, still bearing the name which it had under Spanish rule: 'The United Province of the River Plate', with a calculated population of 700,000 and a relatively large immigrant community, many of them British, living in Buenos Aires for commercial reasons.

The Roman Catholic Church was ultra-conservative (it still is) and held absolute sway over the native population's religious beliefs and practices. Needless to say education was not a priority on the agenda of the priests and the great bulk of the poorer classes were submerged in idolatry and immorality. It is said that not one girl over 11 years old living on the pampas – the rolling grass plains domain of the 'gauchos' or cowboys – was a virgin.

The spirit of those who worked for liberty was somewhat different. The upper classes had sent their sons to Europe for a liberal education and 'Liberty, Equality and Fraternity' had become a watchword of many of these young intellectuals. The philosophy of the enlightenment had greatly influenced them as had their attendance at Masonic Lodges that were hotbeds of political intrigue. Of course all this was anathema to the Roman Catholic Church though there were sectors of the clergy who were more liberal and favoured independence from Spain and the liberalisation of society.

## **James Thomson and Scripture Distribution**

Into this ferment of ideas, mud and fleas stepped James Thomson employed by the 'British and Foreign School Society' and invited by the Argentine government to establish the Lancastrian system of schooling in the country. This system was based on the idea of preparing monitors or tutors from among the pupils who then passed their knowledge on to younger children. It had its philosophical roots in France and its organisational roots in Britain and India. Thomson's financial support came from the Leith Walk Tabernacle, Edinburgh, pastored by James Haldane.

Thomson also had a brief from the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS) but he stayed in Buenos Aires only until the year 1821. His subsequent work for the BFBS

took him to various South American countries. He died in Spain. In Argentina it was impossible for him to start any worthwhile work in Spanish because of the strong opposition of the Roman Catholic Church. Despite this, his plan for schooling, in which texts for reading were extracted from the Scriptures, found decided support in government and Church circles. Furthermore he was responsible for the commencement of the first Protestant meetings in Argentina – on the 19th of November 1820 – in the home of James Dickson and finally in that of William Tait. From 1823 these meetings were pastored by a Presbyterian missionary and finally came under the care of the Methodists. Their continuity can be traced to the present day.

Another fruit of his work was the formation of a Bible Society enthusiastically organised by an English merchant, James Helsby. This continued for some years in the British community. We can only speculate about how James Thomson related to Reformed theology. Unfortunately very little is known about his spiritual life before becoming a Scottish Baptist. One can only assume that he was a Calvinist; his opposition to Romanist beliefs is well documented, as is his ability to make friends with priests, government officials and intellectuals, and gain their confidence and respect. In some instances Bible Societies were formed which included representatives from these groups on their boards. But his ministry was always strongly opposed by fanatical Romanists. It was due to his vision of the opportunities that the BFBS printed 15,000 Spanish Bibles in 1824.

But Thomson was not the first man to have a vision for Scripture distribution in South America. In 1699 Cotton Mather had learnt Spanish, published a tract in that language and promoted the publication of an edition of the Spanish Bible. But it is doubtful if any of this literature reached as far south as the River Plate, so Argentina had to wait until the invasion of the British in 1806, when David Creighton, also of the British and Foreign Bible Society, was able to distribute the Protestant Bible. But the British were soon thrown out and the door closed until Thomson's visit.

In 1823 the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian churches in the USA sent two educators who taught for some years in the university and founded schools. But their stay, for various reasons, was also brief. In 1824 the Anglicans and the Scottish Presbyterians were given government permission to conduct services for their communities in English and in the next decade the Episcopalian Methodists initiated work. Not until the year 1867 were Protestant services in Spanish permitted by law, and the first such meeting was held by an Episcopalian Methodist missionary.

### **Allen Gardiner**

In 1837 another pioneer, of very different stamp, arrived on the shores of South America, by name Allen Gardiner. He had already worked among the Zulus in South



Africa and had met the legendary Dingaana. His passion for unevangelised peoples now fixed on the plight of South American Indians, principally those in Chile, Bolivia and finally the various tribes then inhabiting Argentina's cold southern desert of Patagonia.

To reach Chile Gardiner had to travel the 700 miles, with wife and children, from Buenos Aires to Mendoza, prior to crossing the Andes into Chile. He discovered that it was impossible to sell Bibles in Mendoza because of the power of the priests, though he was able to leave two Bibles with a school master. Having failed in this attempt to start a work amongst the indigenous peoples of Chile, he then travelled on to New Guinea with the gospel, but the Dutch refused him permission to stay. He then took a ship to Cape Town and finally returned to Chile. Here he conceived the idea of using the Falkland Islands as a base from which to reach the Patagonians. He and his family travelled to Port Stanley from where he visited Patagonia with a companion, investigating the situation of the natives and planning his enterprise. He then returned to Britain (1843) to put his plans into action. This period covers just six years in the life of an incredible man!

On the 12th of December Gardiner with a companion, R Hunt, made a journey to the Straits of Magellan with the desire to evangelise the Indians of Tierra del Fuego, the island at Argentina's southernmost tip. They were supported by a missionary committee formed during Gardiner's stay in Britain. Finally, due to the opposition of the natives, they had to abandon Argentine shores, totally destitute. They found no security in Buenos Aires, as it was then blockaded by Britain and France. So Gardiner went on to Bolivia, passing through some of the northernmost regions of what is now Argentina. But his final destiny was in the South. He returned to Britain and on the seventh of January, 1848, with four seamen and a carpenter plus stores for seven months, made his way once more to Patagonia. This visit also failed, largely due to the rapacity of the natives, so he returned home, with the idea of a floating mission station to support the land-based effort.

The final chapter was the start of the South American Missionary Society – a work that was eventually recognised and rewarded by the Argentine government. There are still descendants of the pioneer missionaries farming land in Tierra del Fuego that was gifted by the government to their forebears. But the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church and before souls could be saved seven brave men, including a doctor, a carpenter, a 'waiter and Sunday school teacher' and Allen Gardiner himself, died of starvation on the southernmost coasts of the world. His last written words were dated September 1851, and it was appropriate that he was the last to die, indomitable and persevering to the end.

A further expedition was annihilated by savage Indians in 1859. Since then the South American Missionary Society has been very much identified with work amongst

indigenous peoples and in Argentina has gained a reputation not only for its pioneering in the South (work of which nothing remains today as most of the Patagonian tribes have died out) but also for its important work in the North and West of the country that is thriving today.

The work of Gardiner did nothing to touch the nation's heart until many years had passed. In the 1850s the frontiers of civilisation were barely 400 miles south of Buenos Aires. What lay beyond was deemed of no interest. It is significant that after 400 years of the vaunted 'christianisation' by the Roman Catholic Church, pioneers like those mentioned above were needed to reach the native populations.

### **William Hudson and William Morris**

One name that bridges the gulf between Argentina of the 1850s and Britain of the 1890s is William Hudson, ornithologist and friend of Joseph Conrad, who has written about birds of both countries. His upbringing in Argentina is related in his book *Far Away and Long Ago*. His mother was a godly person and he tells of his own spiritual pilgrimage from John Bunyan and Joseph Alleine to Darwinianism. To read this is deeply saddening. However he also tells how one of his mother's maids, dying of consumption, rejected all comfort from priest, candles and saints, having become a Protestant like her employer. For many years, then, the only gospel light was some of the British community who maintained their faith alive and who occasionally saw fruit from their witness.

In 1870 William Morris arrived in Argentina and by the year 1898 had founded 'Escuelas e Institutos Filantropicos' (Philanthropic Schools and Institutes). From this sprang eighteen schools, an orphanage and other social activities. His philanthropic work was accompanied by gospel preaching. More than 60 years after his death, he is still remembered and honoured today both by believers and unbelievers.

### **Immigrant Influence on Argentine Life**

Buenos Aires has been called the 'Paris' of South America. From the early years of the last century one of the formative influences on Argentine society has been the foreign immigrant community. Two distinct streams can be traced in church life.

First, immigrant communities from Protestant European countries brought with them their own pastors, denominations and social structures often reflecting their own particular expression of Christianity. Foremost are Dutch Reformed, Danish Reformed, Lutheran, Scottish Presbyterian and German Congregational churches. Others that have, for different reasons, had little or no impact on the Argentine Evangelical Church

or the life of the nation generally include Greek and Russian Orthodox and, in Patagonia, Welsh.

Many of these churches were the first Protestant witness to be established in the towns and cities that sprang up during the mid 19th century. By and large, however, they had their services in their own languages, and thus tended to become purely ethnic gatherings that were spiritually dead.

What happened in Tandil (where the writer lives) illustrates this process: In the middle of the last century a Danish immigrant, Juan Fugl, arrived in the area. A very energetic man, he was the first to plant wheat, setting up a mill to produce flour. Other Danes followed him and he went on to set up a school and then in the 1870s the first Protestant church in the area. In his autobiography, Fugl reveals notions about Christianity that are more eclectic than biblical and to the present day there is no evidence of a strong evangelical faith amongst the Danish Lutheran Community.

Other areas also had an influx of foreigners. Welsh Protestants began to colonize the Chebut Valley (Patagonia) in 1864, bringing with them their own pastor. By 1897, despite tremendous difficulties and privations, they had grown to almost two and a half thousand people. Russian Pentecostals, Slavic Baptists and Armenian Christians arrived after 1900, often because of persecution or war in their own countries. Settling in cities where there was already a Spanish-speaking evangelical witness, some mixed easily with their Spanish-speaking neighbours, others formed their own communities. In general they have maintained a strong evangelical and evangelistic emphasis.

The second immigrant grouping has come from non-Protestant countries, such as Italy (40% of the present population of Argentina is estimated to be of Italian extraction), France, Poland and various Arabic-speaking countries as well as a large number of Jews. The gospel has especially penetrated and taken root in the Italian community.

### **Pablo Besson**

Of note was a Swiss Baptist, Pablo Besson who was converted while he was training to be a pastor in the Reformed Church. He finished his studies and took up a pastorate before finally seceding over the issue of State control over the Church. He then moved to Lyons to work with Adolph Monod (an interesting link between the Haldanes and Argentina – see above on Thomson). In Lyons he came under the influence of a Baptist pastor, attempted to disprove believer's baptism, but was later baptised by immersion! He then became an evangelist with the Baptists in France, even being imprisoned for distributing tracts.

French-speaking Belgian Baptists had emigrated to the province of Santa Fe in Argentina and some of their number knew Besson. They invited him to become their

pastor. He duly accepted and arrived in Argentina on the 25th of July, 1881, aged 33 years.

One of the difficulties that Besson met with was that no Protestant could be officially born, married or buried without the blessing of the Roman Church. Protestants were effectively non-citizens with no rights, unless they converted to Catholicism. Besson fought for the separation of Church and State whereas previous Protestant communities had managed to live with the situation, often having their own cemeteries and relying on embassies or ceremonies on foreign ships to legalise marriages and births. But Besson was seeing 'Criollos' (native Argentinians) coming to the Lord and such solutions were not open to them! He soon moved to the capital, Buenos Aires, to be able to fight for this cause at the highest levels of government. In conjunction with liberalising elements within society, religious liberty was finally obtained and the Civil Registry Office established. Today this is the only institution that can legalise births, deaths and marriages.

### **Baptist, Brethren and other missionaries**

Meanwhile a Baptist church was being planted which finally came under the influence and guidance of the Southern Baptist Convention. It would be fascinating to know more about Besson's stance on the doctrines of grace. Perhaps they were an integral part of his background and never needed to be seriously questioned. It is lamentable though that no consciously Reformed Baptist movement sprang out of his ministry, and the modern Baptist movement in Argentina is almost exactly where its Southern Baptist counterpart is today. In 1981 the Baptists in Argentina celebrated their centenary followed a few years later by the Brethren.

Railways came to Argentina in 1879 starting with 1500 miles of track. This had grown to 10,000 miles by 1900 and almost double that by 1901! The expansion grew out of the European market's demand for beef and the need to transport it across the vast pampas. The first refrigerated ships crossed the Atlantic in 1882, boosting immigration and investment, much of the latter from Britain. Many ranchers and railway workers were also from Britain. The first British Brethren missionaries, who arrived in 1882, were both evangelists and 'tent-makers' in these occupations.

Henry Ewing followed by Lister Newton were the first Brethren missionaries to the native population in Tandil. By 1910 an independent evangelical church had been established and the 'Evangelical Hall' was built near the city centre. Other missionaries came from Britain, New Zealand and Europe, often working independently or finally coming under the Baptist umbrella. In 1911, the Evangelical Union of South America was formed in Britain. It became a natural focal point of fellowship and collaboration for these independent missionaries and churches.

Sporadic efforts at evangelism were made by Pentecostals as early as 1909, but growth was very slow compared to the work of the Baptists and Brethren. The Pentecostal churches were often treated as heretical in their teachings and were not accepted by the majority of evangelical believers. Today the situation is reversed with those who do not accept Pentecostal or Charismatic teaching being seen as the odd ones out.

### **Mass Campaigns**

In 1954 the Pentecostal work was put on the map by the 52 day healing campaign of Tommy Hicks. At that time, due to the political situation – Juan Peron was at the height of his power and popularity – evangelistic work was facing many problems. There was difficulty in obtaining permission for special meetings, radio programmes and buildings in frontier areas. In the healing campaign there was an aggregate attendance of nearly two million people and over 25,000 Bibles were sold. It was reported that the president himself attended the campaign and one of his bodyguards was healed.

Without doubt, from then on, the Pentecostal witness was firmly established in Argentina. However the author has heard one Pentecostal leader say that the majority of converts from the campaign ended up in spiritism. He meant this as a condemnation of the failure to follow up those who made profession of faith effectively, but it could also be indicative of the type of ‘gospel’ preached in the campaign.

In the 1960s the churches were, in some degree, affected by the ‘ALERTA’ movement which owed allegiance to Carl McIntyre. This was followed very quickly by the Charismatic movement which had a far greater impact on the life of the churches, splitting many and leading to the formation of new churches. This was the much vaunted ‘revival’ of the 1970s with which Juan Carlos Ortiz was connected. He is now with the Crystal Cathedral and introducing the Schuller style of ‘light gospel’ through television programmes in Argentina.

### **Slaying in the Spirit**

The 1980s were the years of the South Atlantic war, growing frustration and disillusionment in Argentina, and a return to democracy in 1983. There was a sudden upsurge of liberty, feeling free, desire for change and even spiritual concern. Churches were growing, and then suddenly Carlos Annacondia appeared on the scene with his power evangelism. Argentina, at that time, was little used to mass evangelism, after so many years of military rule and a state of siege that limited the churches’ liberty to have mass meetings in the open air. Annacondia added an element, new for Argentina, that of ‘slaying in the Spirit’. Many pastors and churches have been beguiled by this into thinking that revival has really arrived. John White, respected Christian author who at one time worked in Argentina, visited the country and declared that Jonathan Edwards

would have approved of Annacondia. But he was viewing the movement as from the perspective of the 'Vineyard' and 'Wimberism'. Meanwhile churches were once more split, believers were confused and genuine growth went to seed. It is significant that even Pentecostal pastors admit that conversions under Annacondia were minimal. On the basis of their own statistics, members of Carlos Annacondia's team admit that their results are less than Billy Graham's. Carlos Annacondia himself blames the pastors for a failure to conserve the fruits of his campaign.

While the Church is more and more emphasising spiritual warfare and territorial demons and the ministry of liberation, the 1990s have seen one further step toward the bankruptcy of Arminian Christianity and that is the 'unction' movement led by Claudio Freidzon, a Pentecostal pastor. Freidzon in his turn has been influenced by the writings of Benny Hinn, and his 'ministry' in Argentina commenced after meeting Hinn in the United States. Freidzon's meetings, which are attracting thousands of people and hundreds of pastors who want to imitate him, are no more than mass hypnotism. After two or three hours of repetitive chorus singing, some 'healings', some 'slaying in the Spirit', and a sermon of sorts, Freidzon persuades whole groups in the stadium to fall down. There is nothing in the carnival atmosphere that is remotely God-fearing. Some estimate that 60 percent of Baptist ministers are prepared to support this mindless exhibitionism.

The general attitude seems to be that since the 1950s the churches have lost their way, there is a lack of fervour among the believers and a lack of growth. Freidzon is regarded as someone who might bring life but the truth is that both he and the pastors and churches deceived by him are theologically bankrupt and are heading more and more into a darkness of superstition reminiscent of that which prevailed before the 16th century Reformation.

### **Obstacles to be Overcome**

1. Doctrinal orthodoxy is often associated in people's minds with dispensationalism and the Brethren movement, and has produced a strait jacket of practice which the new generation of leaders has rejected. As far as doctrine goes the theology is at best four point Calvinism. It is thematic, not systematic. There is emphasis on the second coming, on the blood, on the birds of the Bible or the symbolic significance of the gates of Jerusalem.

2. There are no good expository preaching models moving hearts and minds by dealing with the deep things of God in a relevant and lively manner. The preachers themselves lack an experimental knowledge of God's presence.

3. There are poor models of church life. One-man rule (the most common model of leadership in Argentina is the 'caudillo'), means that people unquestioningly follow a leader, even if he is wrong. The other model is democracy, the church meeting rules. Either model destroys true Christian fellowship and stifles the correct functioning of the local church.

4. There are deficient models in relation to Calvinism. Most people are converted with the Romanist anti-Reformation prejudices, inculcated in secondary school and unchanged. A lot of Reformed literature is Presbyterian in ethos and nearly all the Argentine churches are Baptistic in practice. The educational system does not teach people to analyse what they read. Prejudice will cause good books to be rejected.

5. There is little idea of true revival. Sensations, excitement and entertainment evangelism with decisionism are regarded as revival.

### **The Way Forward**

So where do we go from here? Those who love the doctrines of grace and have a full understanding of the Reformed position are very few. There are many believers who love Spurgeon (his unabridged sermons are now being published in Spanish), have been blessed by Pink's writings and know of John Bunyan especially through *Pilgrim's Progress*. As has been seen in Brazil (see RT137), reformation is possible through literature which is expository and which addresses the problems described above.

Our need is prayer. Prayer that storms heaven and brings blessing down. Prayer for a reformation and a revival. Prayer for true repentance. Prayer for biblical courage. Prayer for real conversions and prayer for godly men to be raised up. Prayer for the fraternal which is in its formative stages to promote the doctrines of grace. Brethren, please pray for us.

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# Why Leave the Church of England Now?

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*Reg Burrows*

*I have informed the Bishop of Newcastle of my intention to leave the Church of England ministry. On Sunday, 20th March, 1994, I announced my resignation in the services at St Barnabas and St Jude's, Sandyford, Newcastle upon Tyne. As an evangelical Christian I believe the distinctive doctrines of the Church of England in the Prayer Book and the 39 Articles to be biblical. On paper the Church of England is an evangelical church but in practice it officially tolerates error.*

## **Historic Anglicanism is evangelical**

The distinctive doctrines of the Prayer Book and the 39 Articles, notably the authority of Scripture, the sinfulness of human beings through the fall, and justification by grace alone, are the central truths of evangelicalism.

**The Church of England has abandoned the Bible** – *In departing from the faith of the Articles:*

*It officially tolerates error* – The Bishops' Report made a place for the views of David Jenkins. Their report '*Issues of Human Sexuality*' left room for homosexual practices, at least among lay people.

*It refuses to exercise scriptural discipline* – The bishops have refused to declare their policy with regard to practising homosexual clergy. Such men continue their ministry. Heretics are not disciplined.

*It has rejected the biblical gospel* – Few Anglicans preach justification by faith while the movements that destroy the faith, Anglo-Catholicism and Liberalism, remain.

*It denies Christ as the only Saviour and the only way to God* – Multi-faith services deny the biblical truth that the only access to God is by faith in the redeeming work of Christ (John 14:6; Hebrews 10:19ff).

The Church of England is like J Gresham Machen's description of 'an apostate denomination, . . . very largely dominated by unbelief. It does not merely



harbour unbelief here and there. No, it has made unbelief, in the form of a deadly modernist vagueness, the determinative force in its central official life.’

The Bible teaches separation from idolatry and unbelief – 2 Cor 6:17. Disobedience strengthens the hand of God’s enemies and is a danger to evangelicals. There is the problem of confusion to outsiders who despise the weakness and ambivalence of the establishment and simply see Anglican evangelicals as part of the system.

### **The ordination of women is a clear rejection of the teachings of the Bible**

While women often have an effective spiritual ministry, the pattern of eldership in Israel and the New Testament Church was clearly restricted to men. The Bible assigns to men the responsibility of being official leaders and teachers among the people of God. Scripture does not contemplate women having pastoral oversight or preaching and teaching in a mixed congregation. This idea comes entirely from the world.

*The passing of this legislation has undermined the doctrinal basis of the Church of England.*

The High Court ruling means that the General Synod can determine the doctrine of the Church of England, subject to the veto of Parliament. The Synod can amend or throw out the 39 Articles. It can pass legislation against the doctrine of the Articles and the Bible – and get away with it! This the Synod has done in the case of the ordination of women!

*The ordination of women has made the Church of England a liberal denomination.*

It may lead to further massive liberalisation of the Church. This is due to the fact that the bishops who are willing to compromise their beliefs by working with women priests are likely to represent the less ‘conservative’ elements in the Church.

It is virtually certain that the ‘liberal package’ which the acceptance of women to the priesthood represents will also lead to wider acceptance of sexual practices specifically forbidden in the Bible. It is virtually certain that the liberal package of women bishops, ‘gay marriages’, and a ‘feminine god’ will become part of the Church of England. This has already happened in the USA and Canada. Nothing can stop the liberal juggernaut. Nobody can imagine the

vote of November 1992 being reversed. The Church of England is now irreformable.

*The ordination of women reveals the inability of Anglican evangelicals to reform the Church of England.*

Most have yielded to the feminist pressure for 'women priests'. Their interpretation of the Bible is so weak that they have been able to offer little or no resistance.

### **My reasons for leaving the Anglican Church at this stage**

The recent decision by the Church of England Senate to go ahead with the ordination of women is a watershed. It is the point of no return for the Church of England and for Anglican evangelicals.

In October, 1987 our church issued a *Call to Anglican Evangelicals*, calling for a fundamentally new stance among Anglican evangelicals. Then my book, *Dare to Contend*, Jude Publications, £5.95 (Distributed by EP, 12 Wooler St, Darlington, DL1 3ER), was published in 1990. But change has not come about. Evangelicals are not saying clearly that they want an evangelical Church of England. They do not declare that they are working for the removal of Anglo-Catholicism and Liberalism from the Church. They are not preparing openly for secession when reformation fails, as it most certainly will.

I have waited to announce my decision until CHURCH SOCIETY issued its policy statement and REFORM declared its aim at Swanwick Conference in February, 1994. Both advocate good general principles but neither is rallying the troops to fight for an evangelical C of E.

### **Conclusion**

The Church of England has rejected the Bible and its own basis of faith. Anglican evangelicals have not the programme to aim for an evangelical Church of England nor the conviction to leave as a group of churches. Sadly, I must now leave. My heart's desire is to give myself to the work of the gospel, free from having to contend for the faith in the Church of England as well.

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# Are you a Nomist?

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*A review article*

## **Galatians**

Richard N. Longenecker, No 41 in the Word Biblical Commentary series, Word Books, Dallas, Texas. 322 pages plus 120 prelim pages. Hardback £18.99 in UK, \$24.99 in USA.

The author is Professor of New Testament at Wycliffe College, University of Toronto. He claims that Galatians is perhaps Paul's most important and influential letter. 'Historically Galatians has been foundational for many forms of Christian doctrine, proclamation and practice.' Luther loved Galatians, finding in it a source of strength for his own life and an armoury of weapons for his reforming work. He called it 'my own epistle, to which I have plighted my troth; my Katie von Bora'.

This most scholarly commentary begins with a 12 page bibliography in small print of materials on, or bearing on the epistle of Galatians. In a most interesting, helpful and detailed manner he surveys the views of Marcion, Tertullian, the Gnostics, the Alexandrian and Antiochian Fathers, the Protestant Reformers and the Modern Critical Period.

The contents page sets out the structure and argument of the letter and is a great help to a reader keen to grasp the divine genius of the Holy Spirit in this letter and the extraordinary passion of the apostle Paul in the vindication of his apostleship and his defence of justification by faith alone. Useful comprehensive indices of ancient sources, modern authors, principal subjects and biblical texts conclude the volume.

Each section begins with a short bibliography. Then follow comments on the form, structure and setting, after which the author gets down to detail citing the Greek text, following that with his own translation and comments on the grammar and meaning. Excellence by way of clarity pervades these detailed sections. For instance on 3:20 'a mediator, however, does not represent one party; but God is one!' the author refers to Lightfoot who reported in his day that 'the number of interpretations of this passage is said to mount up to 250 or 300'. Of course that is ridiculous but Longenecker takes three viable positions and reasons them through in such a way that the reader is able to perceive the context clearly and come to a firm understanding of the apostle's meaning. Each section of the detailed commentary is then concluded with a summary or explanation of the ground that has been covered. The excellence and power of this

commentary is found in these explanations. In order to keep the whole argument of Galatians clearly in view it is helpful to read the explanations first and then work back into the detailed exegesis.

The main theological impact of Galatians is threefold: 1. To maintain the authentic nature of Paul's apostleship, 2. To defend the great central doctrine of justification by faith without the works of the law – legalism in the form of adding anything whatsoever to the free gift of Christ's righteousness is annihilated, 3. To repudiate libertinism and encourage life in the Spirit for believers.

Longenecker shows clearly that the Judaisers of Paul's day were much more subtle than we might imagine. They were for the most part ready to concede the completeness of salvation in Christ but nevertheless wished to saddle the Gentile believers with their Jewish lifestyle as *the* better way. With this Paul would have nothing to do.

Nomism is a principal issue raised by Longenecker.

The Christian Church today has many who formally oppose legalism but hold firmly to 'nomism'. Theirs is a religion of piety which they believe to be God-honouring. What they fail to realise however is that in many ways they are recapitulating the error of the Judaisers. More importantly they fail to appreciate Paul's words regarding the purpose and function of the law here in 3:19-25, often preferring to dwell on his words of 3:1-18. Furthermore they fail to appreciate the full import of what it is to be 'in Christ' as presented in 3:26-29 (page 150 – Readers are encouraged to refer to the relevant biblical text).

Longenecker does not enlarge here but we take him to be referring to Christians living by law and being governed by a 'nomistic' attitude. Although the author does not mention it, nomism consists not only of an emphasis on commands found in the Scriptures but also of a list of do's and don'ts which have come to dominate in some evangelical circles. This nomistic attitude can be particularly fierce in fundamentalistic circles or in large groups which have been isolated, politically or geographically from other church bodies. The Christian life is not to be portrayed or evaluated by a set of taboos or a list of laws.

The author again takes up the issue of nomism in his comments on Galatians 5:18 as follows:

In concluding his thesis statements of 5:13-18, Paul now relates his two exhortations of 'through love serve one another', and 'live by the Spirit' to the Judaisers' message of a nomistic lifestyle. The Judaisers had undoubtedly argued that only two options existed for Galatian Christians,

either: 1 – a lifestyle governed by Torah, or 2 – a lifestyle giving way to license, such as formerly characterised their lives as apart from God. The Christian gospel however as Paul proclaimed it has to do with a third way of life that is distinct from both nomism and libertinism – not one that takes a middle course between the two, as many try to do in working out the Christian lifestyle on their own, but one that is ‘a highway above them both’. The antidote to license in the Christian life is not laws, as the Judaisers argued, but openness to the Spirit and being guided by the Spirit. For being in Christ means neither nomism nor libertinism, but a new quality of life based in and directed by the Spirit.

But it is not as simple as that. The Christian life is one lived in the Spirit who enables the believer to fulfil the entire law which is summed up in a single command, ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ That command is a summary of the decalogue which is a guide as to what is right and wrong and without which there can be no definition of what is sinful and what is not (1 John 3:4). It is not possible to ignore the difference between the whole Mosaic law which motivated the Judaisers and the moral law or decalogue which continues to and will always be the way in which we judge good and evil. The moral law is the only way in which we can define what is sinful such as the works of the flesh, fifteen of which are catalogued in Galatians 5:19-21. The moral law, as a rule and guide of life for believers, is part of our Reformed inheritance and correctly knit into our Confessions and Catechisms.

I find it significant that, for all the learning displayed in this fine commentary which exegetically is probably the best to date, theologically there is a very serious deficiency, a crucial failure to deal with the central passages bearing on the subject of the moral law as set out in Romans especially Romans 3:31 and Romans 7:7-12. There is nothing on Romans 3:31 and Romans 7:7-12 is only mentioned in passing (cf p120).

In spite of this failure we are indebted to Richard Longenecker for his challenge about nomism. Christians should not be characterised by nomism in the sense that they run round with a little book of laws. Nevertheless Christians should be noted as those who exemplify the perfect keeping of the law of love which is a law that can stand up to examination by the ten commandments!

Are you a self-righteous nomist? Are you characterised by an attitude which is censorious and judgmental, dismissing other believers because they do not keep your laws or observe your foibles? Are you a modern version of the Pharisees? Or are you a dynamic believer crucified with Christ, Spirit-filled and walking in step with the Spirit, holy and pure in every respect, full of love, joy and peace according to Galatians 5:22,23?

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## News

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*Dr Daniel Lundy*

### **Jarvis Street Baptist Church and Toronto Baptist Seminary**

Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, have called Dr Daniel Lundy to be their pastor. His ministry began in February this year. Born in Ontario in 1953 of evangelical parents, he was baptised as a believer at 16 at which time he felt a call to the ministry. At the University of Western Ontario he majored in Greek, Latin and Hebrew. He then earned his Master of Divinity and Master of Theology degrees at Westminster Seminary, Philadelphia. During this time of study he served as a lecturer in Greek.

Dr Lundy's first pastorate was in Quebec. He also taught in the French-speaking Union Baptist Seminary in Montreal. As pastor at Jarvis Street, Dr Lundy is also president of the Toronto Baptist Seminary and editor of *The Gospel Witness*.

Dr Geoff Adams, the principal of TBS retires this May, after a lifetime of service. His all-round, versatile contribution to the seminary and to Jarvis Street Baptist Church has been exceptional. Assisted by his wife Betty he has always cared pastorally, in an outstanding way, for the material and spiritual needs of the students. Biblical theology continues to be his special interest.

### **Serbia**

David Straub, coordinator of RBMS (Reformed Baptist Mission Services) has recently returned from Serbia where he spent time with Pastor Simo Ralevic at Pec and Pastor Cedo Ralevic at Nis. David reports,

'Pastor Simo Ralevic has ministered for more than 20 years in the city of Pec in the Kosovo district of Serbia, Yugoslavia. His pioneer work in this city of 90,000 Muslims and 10,000 Eastern Orthodox Serbs has endured years of intense opposition. The church, House of Prayer – Evangelical Christian Baptist, reaches out to every ethnic and religious group in [the former] Yugoslavia. Through its literature ministry, the House of Prayer distributed over 1,000,000 pieces of literature and Scriptures in 1993. Simo is receiving between 30 and 60 literature requests daily.

In the late 1960s Simo was introduced to the ministry of the Banner of Truth and has been a fearless proclaimer of the gospel of Sovereign Grace to this day. The civil war throughout the former Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has brought unprecedented opportunities for the distribution of Bibles and Christian literature. Pastor Ralevic is printing and reprinting books as quickly as possible to fill orders. Many conversions are taking place with new Christians formed into Bible study groups and new churches. One severe limitation is the lack of an adequate warehouse to store the 100 titles in five languages and two alphabets. With no room left in his house and small church building, work has begun on a separate facility. \$12,000 is needed to make this building functional. \$4,000 will install badly needed computer equipment to enhance the operation and to use for layout and composition of future titles.'



*Simo Ralevic*

Cedo is also involved in relief work for refugees from the civil war. While David was there 18 tons of relief materials arrived from Sweden.

Reports come from other parts of the country that new churches are being organised including the area bordering Bulgaria.

Of the situation at Nis, David Straub reports that the small group which in 1992 numbered about 30 has now multiplied by tenfold. David attended a service in Nis in which the hired building was filled with 300 people while another 50 were listening outside. Hardly a day passes without Cedo receiving a caller either seeking to be saved or requesting believer's baptism. Satan fiercely contests this work and there has been organised public opposition derogating the Baptists. The committee that rent the hall are embarrassed and threaten to remove the right of rental.

### **Violence in the Caribbean**

We were shocked to hear that Pastor Stuart Latimer of the People's Church, Greenville, South Carolina, was the victim of a shooting incident in Trinidad. While visiting Pastor Kendra Sharmasingh of Trinity Baptist Church, the manse was broken into and Pastor and Mrs Sharmasingh, together with Stuart and Charlotte Latimer, were robbed and threatened. Stuart suffered serious gunshot wounds to his leg and at the time of writing is being treated in hospital back in the USA. We pray for him, his family and church at this time.

### **Pastor Aaron Dumas**

In Jamaica crime is also on the rise giving concern for personal safety. Churches are often the targets of robbery and some have hired security forces. Despite a rota of men staying in to guard the First Baptist Church (Pastor Aaron Dumas) during the evenings, there have been several burglaries with loss of furniture and vital equipment. One young woman was accosted and robbed on her way to the church meeting.

This situation makes the fact that Pastor Dumas has been without a car for over six months even more dangerous. He, his wife and son, have to use public transport and have been accosted by thugs several times. A fund has been set up in the USA with the aim to provide Pastor Dumas with a reliable second-hand car. Anybody wishing for more information may contact Pastor Keith Heck, Grace Baptist Church, PO Box 3433, Bartlesville, OK 74006, USA.

### **Pastor Reinhard Bonnke**

The German evangelist, Pastor Bonnke, has completed a campaign to deliver a 32 page coloured booklet to every home in Britain. The cost for the project was eight million pounds. From a production and format point of view the booklet is superior to *Ultimate Questions* by John Blanchard. It falls short theologically but we can only

criticise if we do better ourselves. The very sad lesson from which we can learn is that it is worth paying a further two million to ensure that copies actually find their mark. The booklet was sent out with advertising materials and it may be that only fifty percent actually arrived. We hope to be proved wrong in this pessimistic estimate.

It is claimed that Bonnke's largest congregation in Africa was 500,000. For a one-off meeting in the UK Bonnke's organisers hoped to have a capacity audience of 20,000 at Watford Football Stadium. In the event 2,000 arrived. After warm-up singing the evangelist leapt to the microphone waving vigorously and calling for a 'big, big hand for Jesus'.

Later he called on the stewards (300 had been recruited) to bring those forward who were willing to say they had been healed. In due course about a dozen came forward. One woman claimed that her slipped disc had been cured. "It must be wonderful to get such a healing in such cold weather", remarked Bonnke, calling for a loud hallelujah from the crowd. A young woman who had suffered a stroke testified that her memory was improving. A further testimony was given of a knee that had been healed. There was much clapping and dancing in the aisles which helped to keep the crowd warm in the hail, sleet and icy temperatures.



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# An American Itinerary

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*The editor*

During February and March this year I was privileged to visit several churches in the Southern States. A principal object was to visit family Marcellino. Jerry Marcellino has been called to Audubon Drive Bible Church, Laurel, Mississippi. Here he has been blessed with a gifted eldership of four, a part-time helper and a united, stable church.

Jerry drove me to see George Calhoun of Mt Olive Tape Library. The library is quite extraordinary in its proportions and George a most enthusiastic promoter of the work. We then went on to be with Pastor Thomas Floyd who leads New Home Baptist Church in Mendenhall, Mississippi. I sensed a very warm spirit of worship and appreciation of exposition.

The next visit was to Halbert Heights, Brookhaven and the church pastored by "Cap" Pooser who previously served with the military in Alaska. The former pastor, Thomas Winn, drove me to this appointment. It was a personal encouragement to renew fellowship with pastors Cary Kimbrell and Huey Moak who had travelled from Baton Rouge to attend this meeting. I was shocked to see the destruction of a beautiful area by the recent typhoon.

Pastor Winn now leads Graceway Baptist Church, Jackson, Mississippi, and attends several classes at Reformed Theological Seminary. Accompanying Thomas to the seminary provided the opportunity to



*Left to right are: Joshua, Johnston, Elyse and Cassie Marcellino with their parents Jerry and Dawn*

meet some of the faculty members such as Dr Kistemaker, Douglas Kelly, Kenneth Howell and Prof. Freund who teaches church history. As is the case with Westminster Seminary, Philadelphia, about 25 percent of the students are Korean. There are a number of Baptist students.

My next call was to Heritage Baptist Church, Shreveport, Louisiana where Bill Ascol, who is one of the American agents for RT, is pastor. In 1992 a remarkable provision was made for this new church in the form the gift of an entire complex of buildings with car park, all in good condition. This came from a Baptist group that decided to change course.

The flight to Kentucky was met by Mitchell Jones, pastor of Kosmosdale Baptist Church, Louisville, KY. Mitchell graduated from South Western Baptist Seminary at Fort Worth where he was drawn to the doctrines of grace through Prof. Tom Nettles and further helped by the ministry of Dr Fred Malone. He uses Chapel Library materials for evangelism in the surrounding area. Two years ago he was encouraged by 18 conversions but during the last year he has seen only one. We sow but the Lord gives the increase (2 Cor 9:6).

It was a great encouragement to visit Heritage Baptist Church, Owensboro, KY. I well recall my first visit in 1980 when this assembly was meeting in a school hall. There was at that time a great spirit of hope for the future. Those hopes have not been disappointed. The church and school have grown steadily so that extension is now required for the auditorium. There are 140 students in the Heritage Baptist School. The quality of the school has greatly enhanced the reputation of the church. Three pastors labour together: Ted Christman, Tim Hoake and Keith Madden.

Having begun my itinerary in Pensacola, I returned there to join Pastor LeeRoy Shelton, Jr. for a long drive to Cape Coral. The twelve hour journey gave us time to discuss literature projects concentrating in particular on Russia, Ukraine, Georgia, Belarus, Kazakhstan and the Baltic states.

Tom Ascol, brother of Bill (mentioned above), pastors Grace Baptist Church, Cape Coral, FL. I noted that the midweek meeting was very well attended, an indication of a growing church.



*Dr Douglas Kelly of Reformed Theological Seminary, Jackson, MS, who is leaving Jackson to head up a new seminary in Charlotte, North Carolina. Dr Kelly is the author of the book, Preachers with Power – four stalwarts of the South – Baker, Thornwell, Palmer and Girardeau, Banner of Truth, 200 pp, hardback, 1992*

A constructive time was spent with Ernie Reisinger who lives at Cape Coral. Ernie continues an effective ministry of literature through Christian Gospel Foundation. This work together with the Founders' Conference for Ministers and the Founders' Youth Conference has contributed toward a substantial reformational movement among the Southern Baptists.

### **The Return Journey**

It is encouraging when opportunity is given us to talk to people of widely different backgrounds from whom we can learn while travelling. On the flight home I sat next to an American naval officer. He was a practising Roman Catholic and we talked about justification by faith. Spurgeon's sermon on the text, 'God be merciful to me the sinner,' published by Chapel Library, was ideal to leave with him. On the train from Manchester to Leeds I had an informative conversation with a young law student who had been excommunicated from the Mormons! I left *Ultimate Questions* with him.

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