

REFORMATION TODAY



JULY/AUGUST 1994

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West Park Church, Wolverhampton, led by pastor Gareth Crossley purchased a church building for £70,000. The architects divided the interior into two floors and planned a complete refurbishment recently completed and very attractive. The main ground floor auditorium is shown above. The total cost was £250,000. No debt remains.

CAREY FAMILY CONFERENCE

25 - 30 July 1994

Bolney, West Sussex

The evening meetings are open to visitors. Programme details:

Monday evening David Straub, our visiting speaker from the USA, introduces his theme for the week: *An introduction to Daniel and living in a pagan society*

Tuesday evening – David Ellis on Psalm One – *Living apologetically*

Wednesday evening – John Benton – *Sexuality and the believer*

Thursday evening – Erroll Hulse – *The life and ministry of Francis Schaeffer*

Friday evening – Andrew King on Psalm Two – *Conqueror of the Pagan World*

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CAREY CONFERENCE FOR MINISTERS

4-6 January 1995

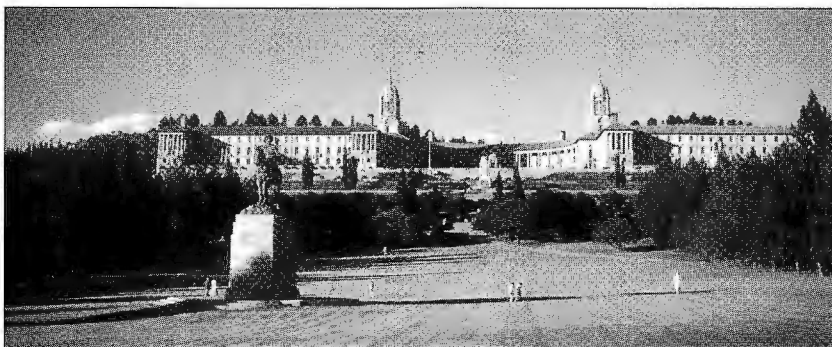
The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire

Speakers: Dr Albert Mohler, President of Southern Baptist Seminary Louisville, Kentucky (*The authenticity of the Gospel Today*), Sinclair Ferguson of Westminster Seminary, Philadelphia (*The experience of the Holy Spirit*), Geoff Thomas (*Powerful preaching from Daniel Rowland to Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones*), and Pastor Bob Sheehan of Welwyn Evangelical Church (*The Love of God for Sinners*).

Conference secretary John Rubens, 22 Leith Road, Darlington, Co Durham, DL3 8BQ

Front cover: View of ancient Warburg where Jörg Müller is engaged in planting a church (see news).

Editorial



Union Buildings, Pretoria, scene of the inauguration ceremony of the New South Africa

The New South Africa

The saga of change ushering in the New South Africa was comprehensively and fairly depicted by British TV as one of the great events of the 20th century. On May 10th 150 nations were represented at the inauguration in Pretoria .

Bruce Jenkins, an architect from Natal, now studying for the ministry at London Theological Seminary wrote to me as follows:

'It seems to me that the hand of God has been marvellously involved at many levels. The inclusion of Inkatha in the elections, the restraint of violence, the arrest of the right-wing bombers which hampered their proposed campaign of terror, the fact that the ANC (African National Congress) did not secure the two-thirds majority that they might have done, are all things for which, I believe, we should be extremely grateful. Yesterday I spoke to someone who heard F W de Klerk speak in London. He said that there was a clear Christian testimony

evident in what he said. Not the kind of thing that you expect to hear from a (former) head of state on an international platform in these secular days. We might wish for the same from Nelson Mandela, but the absence of vindictiveness in him must itself be due to the grace of God.'

These expressions are typical of the responses of most South Africans to the events which profoundly affect their future.

However there is a minority opinion which continues to view the whole saga as a giant Communist conspiracy. One of these is Peter Hammond who edits a small paper called *United Christian Action*. The most recent issue is entirely derogatory about the election and its outcome. In view of the massive difficulties encountered it is amazing that the election was an overall success.

With regard to Christian witness for righteousness, Jesus said we are to be the salt of the earth and light of the world (see article). There is a great difference



Wycliffe Independent Church, Sheffield (see news)

between salt and stinging nettles! Our witness for Christ is nullified if we are unbalanced or sour. Not long ago a few were prophesying civil war in South Africa. Have you noticed that false prophets do not apologise? The degree of order and peace that have prevailed in South Africa is a truly great mercy. Let us attribute that to the common grace of our merciful Triune God.

But is there a Communist conspiracy? I have always been wholly optimistic about the New South Africa. Some have thought me naive but my analysis of the situation is that the new leaders are socialists and pragmatists rather than Stalinists or violent revolutionaries like the Pan-African Congress which was humiliated by a poor result in the election. The British Socialist movement was largely inspired by evangelical Christians. In his commentary on the current situation, Martin Holdt points to the fact that the coalition government is made up of a variety of leaders from across the political spectrum. Most are truly dedicated to raising the standards of the poor and under-privileged and providing employment. This is a daunting task when the whole recessionary tide of

Western life is against it. A pastor who has just returned from Barcelona reports that 25 percent of Spaniards are unemployed.

As Christians we should identify with this widespread human tragedy and show practical concern. During the time leading up to May 10th, black people from different places were interviewed. The majority explained that they know very well that their circumstances will not change overnight or even in a year. At least they are encouraged by words of hope from those whom they have had a part in electing. If practical concern for the under-privileged is genuine then we as Christians must surely have an interest in that aspect of politics. However we are always obliged to reject a-moral and anti-Christian views which lurk in all the political parties of our day.

We should appraise carefully where we can contribute meaningfully to the political spectrum. Our values are absolute. Politics are always relative. The admonition of Jesus (Matthew 5:13-16) forbids us to contract out of society or out of politics. The review of the book *When the Wicked Seize a City* expounds this principle in detail.

The Sufficiency of Scripture

part 2

Bob Sheehan

In the last issue of RT we saw that if Scripture alone is to rule what we believe and practise, continuing prophecies and revelatory dreams are ruled out.

Among Reformed people who reject continuing prophecy and revelatory dreams there is some history of guidance by 'impressions'. Is there any place for these?

Some Reformed Christians accept the theory but do not understand how it can be practised in 'real-life' situations. Others accept it is true but hardly feel it is important.

In this article these Reformed objections to sufficiency are discussed, and solutions to these problems are offered.

The implication of sufficiency for impressions

Sometimes Christians get a very strong impression, feeling or conviction that they ought to do something or that something is happening or is going to happen. These 'impressions' can prompt them to act in a certain way and, if expressed to others, can seem to be strongly 'of God'.

When C H Spurgeon felt that he ought to visit a particular person's house he did so in case this 'feeling' was the direction of God. Men like John Knox and Alexander Peden used to get strong impressions about present or future events and would sometimes express these to their associates. Their use and expression of their impressions had two effects. On the one hand, their devotees often suggested that they were 'prophets' and, on the other hand, their enemies accused them of presumptuously and arrogantly claiming entrance into the secret counsels of God. They denied both interpretations of their impressions.

In responding to the undoubted occurrence of such 'impressions' we need to notice certain important restraints:

Firstly, the famous men we have mentioned, who had these impressions, were themselves very hesitant to claim anything supernatural about them. They were hesitant to say that their impressions were always of God. They argued

that to a large degree their insights and impressions, which others called prophecies, were based on their observance of God's justice and providence and their study of God's Word. History interpreted by Scripture led them to many of their conclusions and the guidance of the Spirit led them to some of their actions.

Secondly, these men gained several enthusiastic followers who loved nothing more than to exalt their heroes by remembering, exaggerating and manufacturing stories about their heroes and their powers. In the modern world, stories about Dr Lloyd-Jones, and what he said and did, are still a growth industry in some circles. Getting beyond the story tellers to the truth is sometimes difficult! Dr Lloyd-Jones only died in 1981.

Thirdly, there have been too many tragic examples of those who gave divine authority to their 'impressions' and lived to regret it (or sometimes died because of it). Even the great George Whitefield was self-deluded on one occasion. 'Following his child's birth Whitefield held a service at the Tabernacle in which he made known his impression that the child would grow up "to be a preacher of the everlasting gospel" and in view of this assurance gave him the name "John".' But within a few days the child died. From then on Whitefield was more cautious about impressions.¹

This caution is well-founded. 'Impressions' that I ought to do something are notoriously subjective, both in being experienced and in their results. Of course, I may be 'moved by the Spirit'² to do or say something. The sufficiency of Scripture does not cancel out the need for providential guidance. The interpretation of providential guidance is often difficult.

If I receive the 'impression' that I ought to do or say something, it would be dangerous to define the ignoring of such an impression as 'sin' or as 'quenching the Spirit'. To take no notice of it may be a mistake, but even that is not certain. Sin has to do with disobedience to God's law, which is objective, not with response to impressions, which are subjective.

When a man has a strong impression that something will happen, expresses it and he is proved to be correct, it does not make him a prophet. A God-given insight which I express is not to be confused with God-inspired speech. Man's words prompted by knowledge granted by God are not the same as God's words spoken by man. In the discussion of the gift of continuing prophecy this distinction is constantly ignored.

In Paul's list of spiritual gifts in his first letter to the Corinthians the 'word of wisdom' and 'word of knowledge' are clearly distinguished from 'prophecy'.³ The modern debate confuses these and makes them synonymous. These New

Testament gifts are paralleled in the Old Testament by the ‘secret of the Lord’ which is ‘with them that fear him’.⁴

Those who reject continuing prophecy altogether have no difficulty with this concept. Two respected commentators state, ‘The man that feareth God shall know more of God’s mind than others shall’ and ‘They understand his Word... they know the meaning of his providence.’⁵

Is such a special insight inconsistent with the sufficiency of Scripture? Thomas M’Crie, biographer of John Knox, wrote, ‘The canon of our faith is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament; we must not look to impressions or new revelations as the rule of our duty; but that God may, on particular occasions, forewarn people of some things that shall happen, to testify his approbation of them, to encourage them to confide in him in particular circumstances, or for other useful purposes is not, I think, inconsistent with the principles of either natural or revealed religion.’⁶

What authority did these impressions or intimations have on the great men of old? ‘Whatever intimations of this kind they enjoyed, they did not rest the authority of their mission upon them, nor appeal to them as constituting any part of the evidence of the doctrines which they preached to the world.’⁷ It was the Scriptures alone which taught them what to believe and do to please God, but ‘the secret of the Lord’ or ‘a word of knowledge’ could be their encouragement.

The sufficiency of the Scriptures in practice

When we seek to put the sufficiency of Scripture into practice, what is involved? There are four things which we need to look for in Scripture in order to know what we are to believe and do. We look for:

1. A command

There are some things which God in his Word has commanded us to do. They are not obscure or unclear. We do not have to ask whether the commands of God are to be obeyed or not. Rather we show our love to him by obeying his commands joyfully.⁸

2. A prohibition

Some commands are positive, some are negative. There are things we are not to do. The modern obsession with being positive does not fit into a biblical context. The gospel teaches us to say ‘no’ to some things and ‘yes’ to others.⁹

3. An example

The large amount of historical narrative which is found in the Scriptures, both Old and New, embodies in real life situations the outworking of faith. All that

is written is there to teach us, and one of the main methods of teaching is by example, whether for encouragement or warning.¹⁰ Of course, only by interpreting the examples in accordance with the commands and prohibitions of Scripture can the decision be made whether the example is good or bad, unless there is something explicitly stated in the text.

4. A principle

Paul draws principles out of Scripture in order to direct behaviour. An Old Testament law about not muzzling oxen as they tread out the corn is used to demonstrate the principle that those who preach the gospel should live by the gospel.¹¹ Even where the Scripture does not give a command, prohibition or example, there is always a principle for each and every situation in our ever-changing world.

To use these commands, prohibitions, examples and principles properly three things are needed:

1. Prayer

The Scriptures are not automatically understood, either by the scant reader or by the intellectual student. Not only do they contain some things which are hard to understand but the Scriptures can only be properly understood by those to whom the Spirit of God gives spiritual discernment. Unless God opens the eyes of the reader the wonderful truths of Scripture will remain hidden. For this God-given illumination we must pray.¹²

2. Study

Even in Apostolic days those who would understand and explain the Word had to study. Paul encouraged Timothy to give himself to the whole-hearted study of the Scriptures so that his progress would be obvious and he need not be ashamed.¹³ There is no short cut to study; it takes time, thought, meditation and energy. Our 'instant' age will always have those who prefer an instant 'prophecy' to the study of the infallible Word of God.

3. Proper hermeneutics

Hermeneutics, the principles of interpretation, are exceedingly important. A command or doctrine which is misunderstood can do untold harm and damage. Whenever the Apostle Paul realised that he had been misunderstood he was concerned to clarify the situation so as to leave his readers in no doubt about his true intention. When the Corinthians misapplied church discipline to create a semi-monasticism he corrected their misinterpretation as quickly and clearly as possible.¹⁴

Proper hermeneutics are going to require a careful and honest handling of the Scriptures. This will involve questions about the type of literature being considered: is it prose or poetry, history or allegory? questions about the

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context; parallel passages in the Scripture, the type of language used, figures of speech, etc. All these principles aim at getting to the true meaning so that the correct application can be made. This involves hard work, but it is necessary if God's will is to be discerned.

Why is the sufficiency of Scripture so important?

As in the Scriptures we are taught all that we need to know in order to believe and do all that pleases God, four important consequences follow:

1. Only from the Scriptures may we bind other people's conscience, or our own, as to what is to be believed.

When we are challenged that we must believe such and such an idea if we would please God we have every right to require proof from God's Word that it is a belief required by God. Where there is no biblical proof, there can be no such requirement.

The attitude of C H Spurgeon ought to be ours: 'If God teaches it, it is enough. If it is not in the Word, away with it! But if it be in the Word, agreeable or disagreeable, systematic or disorderly, I believe it.'¹⁵

We will bind ourselves by what God requires us to believe in his Word, the Bible, but by no mere man-required belief. We need to distinguish between the commandments of men and the commandments of God.¹⁶

2. Only from the Scriptures may we bind other people's consciences, or our own, as to what is to be practised.

When faced with Roman Catholic practices in the Church of England, with no scriptural warrant, the early Puritan, William Turner, responded, 'Almighty God told his Son Christ all laws that was (*sic*) necessary for Christ's Church and Christ taught his Apostles all that he heard from his Father, and all that the Apostles learned from Christ necessary for Christ's Church they and the Evangelists have written in the New Testament which is the law of the Gospel. But the Evangelists and Apostles have made no mention of the Pope's ceremonies, laws and traditions; therefore they are not necessary for Christ's Church, but the law of the Gospel is necessary alone.'¹⁷ This is precisely correct. I can be required to obey no practice which God's Word does not require. Christians do not worship God or serve him according to man-made rules.¹⁸

3. *Only Scripture may define sin.*

That Christ's disciples should have kept the Sabbath in accordance with God's law is not in doubt. However, plucking ears of corn while walking through the fields on the Sabbath Day did not contradict God's laws, only the traditions of the rabbis. Jesus, therefore, dismissed the idea that his disciples were acting sinfully.¹⁹

God defines sin for us; man does not. We may not accuse of sin those whom God does not accuse. Our scruples may not bind the consciences of others, although they may choose to bind themselves for our sakes.²⁰

4. *We may not bind others with guidance which is not biblically substantiated.*

The lives of many people have been ruined by a new tyranny exercised by those who claim the authority of the Holy Spirit to guide others as to their marriages, jobs, almost everything. 'God has told me that you should...' has become the new authority, and is a road to spiritual bondage and a route of great danger.

What is needed is not the guidance of the self-proclaimed seer but the direction of God to those who pray and study his Word. Few stories in the Bible are more tragic than that of the man of God from Judah who died because he followed what someone else claimed was God's word to him.²¹ We ought to follow the certainties of Scripture not the claimants of superior knowledge.

The Scriptures are sufficient and this doctrine is important because it safeguards both God's truth, enabling us to know where to go for his Word, and secures our Christian liberty over against those who would take us captive to do their will, for only God is the Lord of conscience. Having God's recorded revelation in his Word why should we turn to man-made chaff? Let us rather cling to the Bible, though all else be taken, for in the sure and certain Word of God we have all we need to please God. What more can we want?

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The Implications of 'Evangelical Feminism'

By Stephen Rees, reported by Geoff Thomas

During the Annual Grace Assembly of Baptist Churches attended by representatives from 75 congregations and held in Child's Hill Baptist Church, London on May 20-21, Stephen Rees, pastor of Grace Baptist Church, Stockport, spoke on the subject of 'Evangelical Feminism'. He pointed out that there were many Christian people – theologians, Bible scholars, leaders in different institutions – who call themselves 'evangelical' and yet who are promoting feminist ideas. He showed that evangelical feminism has radical effects:

1. For the Authority of Scripture

When we turn to Scripture itself it is very clear on a straightforward reading that the relationship of men and women is not reciprocal. Man has a certain priority. He was created first. Woman is created out of man, and for man. Man is the head of the woman. There is a hierarchy of roles which is analogous to the hierarchy which exists between Father and Son in the Godhead. Within marriage a woman is to be in subjection to her husband. Within the church certain roles are inappropriate for the woman.

Now if evangelicals who have claimed to believe in the infallibility of Scripture want to assert the absolute reciprocity of men and women then they are going to have to do one of two things: they are

either going to have to change their view of Scripture, or, they are going to have to find a new way of interpreting Scripture which will allow it to mean the opposite of what it seems to mean. On a massively wide front, evangelicals are doing both these things. It appears that evangelical feminism is performing the same role in the evangelical community as theistic evolution played a hundred years ago. Those who advocate it have a commitment to their new view which outweighs their commitment to Scripture, and which ultimately will squeeze out their commitment to Scripture. We need to be aware especially that evangelical feminists have introduced a whole new hermeneutical approach to the evangelical world. This they have been impelled to do in order to account for what they don't want to see in Scripture. This new hermeneutical approach is one which ultimately undermines the whole authority of Scripture.

2. For Biblical Theology (Redemption History)

Remember it is axiomatic for the evangelical feminist that patriarchy is an evil thing. To them it is always contrary to the will of God. The idea of male leadership, and especially the practice of reckoning descent and inheritance in the male line, is abhorrent to feminists. They regard that as simply a product of human

sinfulness. Now, how much does that leave of the biblical story of covenant promise to the chosen seed, from Abraham to Isaac, to Jacob, to a line of male heirs, to David, to Solomon and then to a line of male rulers? Remember, the evangelical feminist to be consistent has to oppose all that grand history of redemption and regard it as contrary to God's real intention. This is the line that is being followed.

3. For our Soteriology

Our whole doctrine of sin and salvation centres around two men, Adam and Christ: one the head of the old humanity, one the head of the new humanity. We say that Adam's sin – not Eve's sin – not the sin of Adam and Eve together – brought death into the world, and all our woe! We say that Adam alone stood as representative head of the human race, and that the position of Adam and Eve was not reciprocal in that. And we say that the uniqueness of Adam in this respect points the way to the uniqueness of Christ. For evangelical feminists that whole structure of the fall in Adam and redemption in Christ ultimately has to be abandoned.

4. For the Doctrine of the Trinity

We believe that the hierarchy of roles between men and women is created to reflect the hierarchy of roles within the Godhead. 'The head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God' (1 Cor 11:3). Evangelical feminists are

forced to assert that there is no hierarchy of roles within the Godhead. In other words they are forced to abandon the historic doctrine of the Trinity, and many have done so. This is the view, for example, that is offered as the orthodox view in the *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* which Walter Elwell edited for Baker Book House, USA. Consider its entry on 'Subordinationism' by Richard and Catherine Kroeger.

5. For the Ordering of Church, Home and Society

This is obviously all-encompassing. If we adopt a feminist stance it will clearly have enormous implications for the ordering of church life, for the ordering of family life and the ordering of society generally. We need to know what those implications are.

For those who want to get some idea of what evangelical feminists are teaching, a typical book is: *Equal to Serve: Women and Men in Church and Home*, by Gretchen Gaebelein Hull, foreword by Elaine Storkey, published (and highly commended) by Scripture Union. Ms Hull is a Bible teacher and elder in the Presbyterian Church in the USA. The historic Christian position is presented and a thorough critique provided in the symposium entitled: *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, edited by Piper and Grudem, and published by Crossway. Also commended is: *Man & Woman in Christian Perspective* by Werner Neuer (translated by Gordon Wenham), Hodder & Stoughton, which is a penetrating study.

When the Wicked Seize a City

When the Wicked Seize a City, Chuck and Donna McIlhenny with Frank York, Huntington House Publishers, P O Box 53788, Lafayette, LA 70505, USA, 1993, 235 pages.

The Sexual Dead-End, Stephen Green, Broadview Books, London, 1992, 482 pages.

San Francisco is regarded as a haven for gays and lesbians. To this city militant homosexuals have come from all over America. The Gay community is well organised. Although premature death through AIDS is rampant many suffer the delusion that they are creating a new civilisation.

Chuck McIlhenny is an OPC (Orthodox Presbyterian Church) minister. When he began his ministry in San Francisco in 1973 he had no idea of the spiritual war awaiting him.

Tribulation began when Chuck was informed that his organist was a practising homosexual. Once this was confirmed the organist was dismissed. The dismissal led to a law-suit. The organist's solicitors rested the case on newly enacted legislation protecting the rights of the Gay community in San Francisco.

Financial disaster threatened the church which was by no means united since some did not regard the issue as one to be contested at such expense. However the OPC denomination voted to support the member church. 100,000 dollars had to be found. McIlhenny himself had to travel the country to raise support. A specialist lawyer of Reformed conviction was hired to defend the church's case. In the meantime the mass

media latched onto the story and blew it up to headline proportions. This attention aroused the wrath of the Gay community.

In the trial the lawyer defending the church asked some very telling questions about the meaning of sexual orientation. Was it right to sexually molest children? Was it right to have sex with animals? Was it morally right for a church to employ a practising and unrepentant sinner? The dismissed organist was unable or unwilling to give coherent answers to these and other questions and the case was won by the church. An appeal was made to a higher judiciary but suddenly that appeal was dropped.

The result led to an unrelenting war against McIlhenny and his church. The family was terrorised daily by death threats over the phone or by mail. Protesters attended the Sunday services in punk-style garb, intent on distracting the congregation. In 1983 the McIlhenny's home was burned down. The three children only just escaped through the flames. In 1990 the church, adjacent to the McIlhenny home, was attacked, the windows smashed in with hammers, and obscene graffiti sprayed over the walls.

This book exposes the lifestyle of the Gay community and describes the Gay

agenda for homosexualising Public Schools. It also opens to view the extraordinarily aggressive and obscene manner in which the Gay community conduct their street processions. The degradation reflects Romans chapter one. These are displays of the reprobate mind which God has given over to judgment. If the reader has doubts about eternal hell, these descriptions will strengthen credibility of that coming reality for sinners who hate God.

Nevertheless McIlhenny constantly holds up the gospel as the way of salvation applicable to every individual. You would conclude by the general behaviour of this community that there is no hope for them, but in actual fact individuals are known to have been snatched from the fire.

The purpose of the book is to alert evangelicals to the dangers of the Gay movement, which loudly lays claim to comprising ten percent of the population, but in fact is only one percent overall. Obviously the percentage is higher in San Francisco.

The issues are not far away. Parents in America are finding that their objections to homosexual promotion in schools are rejected. When they say that they will withdraw their children from such classes the response is that the children will then face expulsion (see page 230).

The writing style is earnest and arresting. The author and his wife are very frank and open about their own faults and temptations. Although this is not a pleasant book to read, it provides a

valuable commentary on what is really happening in our Western secular society. It also reveals the precarious and vulnerable nature of the law system in the USA.

For readers who wish to have further documentation relevant to America we recommend: F LaGard's *Sodom's Second Coming – What You Need to Know About the Deadly Homosexual Assault*. This 250 page paperback is published by Harvest House Publishers, 1075 Arrowsmith, Eugene, Oregon 97402, USA (available in the UK at £4.95 plus p&p from Tabernacle Bookshop, Metropolitan Tabernacle, Elephant & Castle, London SE1 6SD).

Some British readers may think that this menace is confined to America. It is not! Stephen Green, an evangelical Anglican, has written a book which took seven years to research. *The Sexual Dead-End* is a 482 page, thoroughly documented, comprehensive, factual description of homosexual and lesbian behaviour and political agenda. Included is an examination of the legal system as it relates to aberrant sexual behaviour, and a short history of the policies of the leading political parties in Britain. This is an invaluable treatise. All those in social, political or educational positions should be urged to read it. One appendix lists leaders who promote humanist or pro-Gay legislation, another provides statistics of death by AIDS. This shocking yet sober treatise can be obtained from Broadview Books, PO Box 782, London SW16 2YT. Telephone orders for payment by credit card may be made within the UK on 081 664 6444. Cost £9.95 p&p £2.05.

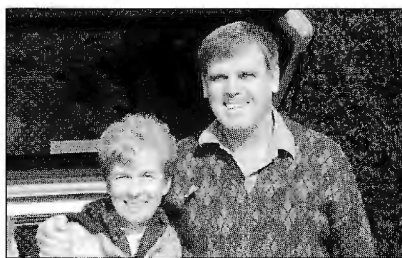
The New South Africa

A letter from Martin Holdt, June 1994

The New South Africa has dawned bringing a great sense of relief to most people in the country. Evangelical Christians in general accept the outcome of the elections with deep gratitude to God. The overruling hand of the Sovereign Lord was so apparent that even the unbelieving have often attributed the remarkable process to divine interposition. We who are committed to our calling in Christ in this country may now continue to do our work without the political tensions of the past.

There is one known practising Christian in the new cabinet. He is Mr Derek Keys, the Minister of Finance. He is a devout and a godly man and is internationally acclaimed as a man of unusual skills and particularly fitted for his portfolio.

One of the cabinet members, Joe Slovo, was formerly head of the South African Communist Party which is a matter of concern, as is the fact that there is a disproportionately strong Muslim representation in the new Parliament compared with the percentage of Muslims in South Africa. It is reported that the ANC has no less than seventeen such in their ranks. This, however, needs to be seen within the context of a considerable number of Members of Parliament who are at least God-fearing, some of them committed Christians. The African Christian Democratic Party which polled nearly ninety thousand votes in the election is represented by two good men. One can only hope that corruption will be avoided.



Beryl and Martin Holdt

The greatest present need in the evangelical constituency in South Africa (which is encouragingly high), is for an upgrading of doctrinal standards. On the average, preaching is pathetically feeble. It is not uncommon for people who move from one place to another to become disillusioned when they cannot find a suitable evangelical church. Standards of preaching in black areas are alarmingly poor. We have made attempts to assist black South African pastors, but feel that little headway has been made. On the positive side, we have been heartened to discover new churches where the Reformed faith is powerfully presented where barrenness once prevailed.

Some of the privileges which evangelicals have enjoyed in South Africa in previous years may be threatened because of the humanistic approach currently being adopted in many quarters in Government. For the time being, we enjoy making use of television and radio facilities, and are most encouraged at the response to the Word of God on the airwaves. Please pray that the effect of the Christian witness in South Africa will be maximised to the full in order that the beloved country may cry to God for mercy in an hour of great need.

Salt and Light

The conference programme for the 7th International Baptist Conference in Toronto is *The Believer as Salt and Light: The Ethics of Jesus*. By way of preparation on this practical and relevant theme the following exposition is offered.

You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled by men.

You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.

In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven (*Matthew 5:13-16*).

The aptness of the idea of salt

Throughout the history of the world salt has been recognised as an essential ingredient to preserve food and to give food savour. When President Nelson Mandela of the New South Africa gave his inaugural speech he referred to the need of every citizen for bread, water and salt. Before the 20th-century development of refrigeration technology, salt was the primary method of preserving foodstuffs, especially meat and fish.

The spiritual meaning is that believers are required to exercise an influence in society which is to work to preserve that society from moral corruption. As we read in Romans chapter one, the tendency toward ungodliness and subsequent corruption is always present. As salt is rubbed into fish or meat so Christian influence is to be rubbed into society. Salt is not quarried to be confined to salt cellars but is designed for use. Christians are not to be confined to monastic institutions but are to mix with people.

The twofold use of salt

Salt is not only a preservative to prevent corruption. Salt seasons. Salt brings out the flavour. One meaning of the word is 'to give zest'. Christians should have zest. We are reminded us that there is to be a negative character in our witness which reproves sin, but also there must be that which points to the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

A testimony is easily ruined if there is bad temper, ill-will, imbalance, arrogance or pride, impurity, or any tendency toward vengeance or resentment.

The 7th International Baptist Conference

The Believer as Salt and Light: The Ethics of Jesus

October 17-20, 1994 – Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto

Subjects and speakers:

The Believer as Salt and Light *John Campbell*; The Christian and the Moral Law *Walt Chantry*; Murder, Retribution and Reconciliation *Dinu Nicodim Bulzesc*; The Christian and Homosexuality *Alan Boyd*; The Christian and Domestic Violence *Paul Appéré*; The Christian and Politics *John Redekop* or The Christian and the Elderly *Daniel Lundy*; Marriage, Adultery and Divorce *Conrad Mbewe*; Swearing of Oaths *Don Garlington*; Civil Retaliation versus Non-Resistance *Michael Haykin*; Loving

Your Enemies *Martin Holdt*; The Believer's Inward Ethical Character *David Bugden*; The Believer's Outward Ethical Character *Erroll Hulse*; The Christian and Sexual Abuse *Brian McNaull* or The Christian and the Nurture of Children *Norman Street*; The Christian and the Work Place *John Reisinger* or The Christian and the Poor *Robert Duez*; Jesus Christ – The Light of the World *Tom Smith*.

For quick registration call Canada (416)925 3263 or FAX (416)925 8305.

What about involvement in politics?

Occasionally a believer is given the special abilities and calling to enter politics in a professional way. Thankfully there are some outstanding instances such as the Earl of Shaftesbury and Wilberforce, in which great good has been achieved on a wide scale by Christians in politics. Caution should be exercised as more harm than good is achieved when Christians, ill-equipped for the extraordinary demands of political life, get involved.

Since politics and ethics are intermingled it is facile to say that Christians can simply ignore political issues. The review of the book *When the Wicked Seize a City* illustrates one scenario, albeit exceptional, in which there was no alternative but to stand fast for righteousness. Neutrality is not possible. However the balance is fine when it comes to the amount of time to be expended on ethical issues. Pastors in particular have to be careful that they are not carried away with involvement in a moral crusade to the neglect of their primary calling.

Likewise Christians in secular life have to assess with wisdom the allocation of time to be devoted to issues such as the local school or community affairs.

The terrible warning of our Lord

A most stern and detailed warning is given by our Lord about salt losing its effectiveness. In actual fact sodium chloride, which is the chemical composition of salt, is a very stable compound able to resist almost every form of attack. However it is possible for salt to become contaminated by mixture with impurities. It then becomes useless and can also be dangerous.

A Christian testimony is destroyed by immorality or corruption. The witness of those who live in sin is not only useless but worse than useless. Evil behaviour in

a professor of religion will result in repugnance and indignation. Just as salt which has been poisoned will be thrown out and trodden under foot of men, so an immoral profession will be rejected on the Day of Judgment.

This does not mean that a professing Christian who falls into sin is only left to perish in this world and consigned to everlasting hell in the next. Repentance is required which is commensurate to the harm that has been done. In general terms the example of the prodigal son is helpful. Discernment and time are required to recognise whether repentance in a professor of religion is genuine or feigned. Ultimately only the Lord knows.

The importance of being in the world

Our Lord is also convicting us all of the need to be the salt of the earth, that is, to be out there among people, truly in the world as he was, but not of the world. 'Have salt in yourselves,' said Jesus (Mark 9:50). Christian saltiness is Christian character. It is a Christlikeness depicted in the Beatitudes. If believers become worldly by being assimilated into the character of the world and being contaminated by it, they forfeit their effectiveness.

The light of the world

Jesus said of himself, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life' (John 8:12). The light of life refers to spiritual knowledge which provides assurance about the character of God, his purpose, the design of the family, of work, of the Church and the way of salvation. This is contrasted with darkness which denotes ignorance and meaninglessness.

Christians are the light of the world as they live in accordance with the gospel and as they share the truths of that gospel. With the emphasis on holy and blameless living those who live for Christ 'in a crooked and depraved generation', are described as shining like stars in the universe.

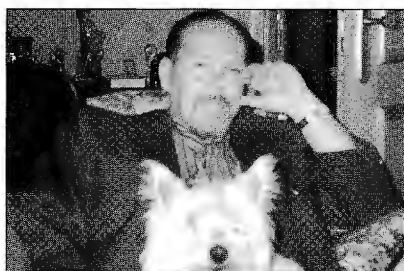
How exactly are Christians to shine?

Jesus is specific in his reference to good works. 'That they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.' Good works cover everything that a Christian says or does. Observe that the text does not say that they may *hear your good words*, but rather *see your good works*. Testimony both by deeds and words is necessary if the light of the gospel is to shine. The light shines particularly brightly when good deeds and expository words work together in places like Somalia, Rwanda, Bosnia, Kampuchea, Mozambique, San Francisco and the world's inner cities. In the news section there is reference to the work of Charles and Julie Woodrow in Nampula, Mozambique. They have been given a wonderful work of practical good works in medical care and surgery but are calling for those who will work alongside them to provide the light of Christ in preaching and teaching.

News



Jörg Müller



David Seefried

Germany

Jörg Müller aged 33 is engaged in church planting in the ancient town of Warburg (near Kassel). The ground floor of the building (*see page 19*) on the right hand side of the picture is hired by the church and though modest has adequate pleasantly furnished facilities. Just beyond is the well-attended Roman Catholic church. Warburg, with environs, has a population of 28,000 (87 percent RC).

As part of a committee of three, Jörg has been involved in the publication and distribution of four titles translated into German: Iain Murray's *The Forgotten Spurgeon*, M de Semlyen on *Roman Catholicism*, Dr D M Lloyd-Jones on *2 Peter*, and a work by A Pieters and J Gerstner examining *Dispensationalism and the Schofield Bible*. Under preparation are: *Life By His Death* by John Owen (Grace Publications, abridgement) and *The Reformation in Europe* by J M d'Aubigné.

David Seefried pastors an American Baptist Church serving three air bases near Kaiserlautern in the South.

Both David and Jörg are concerned that there is no conference to promote reformation in Germany and as far as they know, no reformational journal. The evangelical cause in Germany is represented mostly by Evangelical

Lutherans, Pentecostals, Christian Brethren, Baptists and Independents. Jörg and David are confident that many will respond to a mid-week conference with a well planned programme.

Kenya – a report by Pastor David Ellis of Cuckfield

Following a visit last year my wife Barbara and I, accompanied by a young minister, Dick Seed of Beckenham, Kent, returned to Trinity Baptist Church, Nairobi which is led by Keith Underhill. Dick and I were scheduled to have an extensive ministry which began with a weekend of ministry in Nairobi.

Early on the Tuesday morning we set off in a hired car to travel 400 kilometres northwest to Webuye. In accord with my request Geoffrey Buliba and Tom Omukhobero had organised efficiently (even to the point of sounding an African drum exactly the time each session should end!) a full programme of teaching.

Twenty-four pastors, some with their wives, arrived from many parts. One had travelled for an amazing time of six days all the way from Zaire. (That must surely beat even the longest journey to the annual Reformed Conference in Brazil!) Sadly tribal tensions and situations of famine precluded some from coming because they



The organisers of the conference at Webuye, Kenya. Left to right: Tom Omukhobero, David Ellis, Geoffrey Buliba and Dick Seed

could not leave their families. Dick and I were committed to tutoring in such a way as to engender expository preaching. Dick taught from the OT while I used 1 Timothy to urge and illustrate the expository method. We had previously posted commentaries to these pastors. While we were busy with teaching sessions for the men, Barbara instructed the ladies. A problem widespread in Africa is the lack of education and we had to adjust ourselves in style and pace. Basic problems emerged such as polygamy which is common. It was evident that some have been influenced by the 'signs and wonders movement' which can have the sad effect of causing ill-informed dogmatism. One pastor needed help on the doctrine of the deity of Christ. It was encouraging to observe that at least one had a firm grasp of the doctrines of grace.

At this stage Dick was scheduled to visit missionary friends and then return to the UK. Barbara was exhausted and joined Priscilla at Thimlich and Keith and I set off for South Nyanza to visit villages that you will not find on the map. The men who have responsibility for the churches must walk everywhere. They need books and a bicycle would make all the difference! At Bomet we met Michael Koetch, the principal of a small Bible School, who is doing a fine work. The roads were really rough tracks on which four wheel drive vehicles are needed. On one route we simply had to leave the car and continue by

foot. The tracks were made even more hazardous by the rainy season.

Lone Christians within unbelieving families in isolated areas find it hard to extricate themselves from tradition. Spiritist rituals, such as those which accompany funerals, bind the people and impoverish them further as they seek to appease the spirits of the dead. It is hard for Christians to stand firm and the temptation is to conform but they know they must not.

By way of conclusion I will draw attention to the hospitality of poor believers who, even though they are living in famine conditions, are ready to share what little they have. We found this difficult to handle. The hunger for the Word of God is inspiring to observe. We noted villagers including elderly women walking miles to attend all the meetings.

I commend for prayer Nigel Lacey of Stowmarket who is due to visit the above described areas in August and September.

Mozambique

Charles and Julie Woodrow, who are both doctors, labour in Nampula, in the north of Mozambique. A devastating cyclone struck Nampula on the night of March 24th this year. Trees were blown away and every mud hut was either washed away or blown down. Solid plastic sheeting provides a valuable temporary covering while homes are being rebuilt.

The Woodrows, who have been used to re-establish the hospital after the war, reported in April that 15,000 dollars have been donated by the US Embassy for enlargements to the hospital. They say: 'The hospital evangelistic services were restarted a month ago and already we are seeing better responses than ever before. While that is most gratifying, it also re-awakens the realisation that help is needed for all areas of ministry.

'Thankfully God is still at work in spite of the meagre exposure these individuals have to the Word of God. But, like Barnabas found in Antioch, we see more than ever the need for a missionary team in this

ministry. Faith is dependent upon the content that is to be believed. How can there be faith where there is no knowledge? As Paul says in Romans 10:14-15, "How then can they call on the one that they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news'!"

The Mozambique Evangel, describing the work of the Woodrows, is published monthly and distributed free of charge by Grace Missions, 13724 Lookout Road, San Antonio, TX 78233-4518, USA.

The Ultimate in Modernism

Writing in *Christianity Today* (April 25, 1994), Don Carson describes a group of 74 scholars who have published a work with the title, *The Five Gospels* and subtitle, *The Search for the Authentic Word* (Published by MacMillan). This learned group deem that 82 percent of the Gospels is inauthentic. Funds for the project come from the Westar Institute in California.

The basic postulate is that the Gospels can be discountenanced because the Gospel writers were passionate and therefore biased. Hardly endued with the grace of humility, this group acknowledge only that scholarship which accords with their modernistic presuppositions. They of course are not passionate and therefore unbiased! They show antagonism toward the dictatorial tactics of the Southern Baptist Convention and all other fundamentalists or fundamentalisms. Anyone so naive as to believe the Bible is labelled fundamentalist, and fundamentalism is the dirty word by which all Bible believers are dismissed.

If and when we are confronted with unbelief of this kind it is a good idea to turn to the first paragraph of John's first letter and ask the question: 'John, are you telling the truth when you tell us about Jesus?'



Freie Evangelische Gemeinde, Warburg, Germany, adjacent to the large Roman Catholic church

Sheffield, Yorkshire, England

Recently I took the 30 minute drive down the M1 from Leeds to Sheffield. It was on election day in South Africa when huge numbers waited patiently in queues to vote. I was held up by Elland Road stadium due to a soccer match and learned afterwards that 55 soccer hooligans had been arrested at this match, probably more than in the whole of South Africa on their election day!

The purpose of my visit to Sheffield was to attend the midweek meeting of the Wycliffe Independent Church, situated near the city centre (population about 500,000). John Waite was one of my tutors at London Bible College. From LBC he went to lecture at the Barry Bible College in Wales. Nine years ago he took up the pastorate of Wycliffe Church, Hickmott Road, Sheffield.

The church began in 1908 as a free grace mission and in 1945 moved into a hut with corrugated iron walls and an asbestos roof, situated beside a stream in Hickmott Road. I remember preaching there and noting how easy it would be for the rickety old structure to be swept away if ever the



John Waite

stream came down in flood!

In 1986 an architect within the membership persuaded the church that it was feasible to use the site for a new building which would comfortably seat about 200. Plans were duly presented to the City Council. In 1988, despite the lack of car parking facilities, outline planning permission was granted.

In 1992 detailed plans which included cantilevering over the stream were drawn up by an architect. The Council was approached again. There were obstacles but eventually permission was granted. In May 1993 work commenced. The cost of building was originally estimated at about £230,000 but due partly to bad weather (which included the stream coming down in flood!) the costs rose to £260,000. The final sum including furnishings and carpets came to £288,000. Wonderfully, these costs have been met with determined efforts by the church over the whole period since it was decided to go ahead. Morning congregations average 180 (none rich and some unemployed) with between 20 and 30 students attending in term time.

A property was rented during construction and the church has enjoyed excellent unity of purpose throughout the transition. The photos give a limited impression of the new sanctuary which is truly pleasing both externally and internally. There is a sense of elation as the advantages following a long struggle are now enjoyed. They



Internal view of Wycliffe Church
(for external view see editorial)

ascribe success to answered persevering prayer and effort. The cry goes up, 'He has done great things for us whereof we are glad'!

What an advantage it would be if in every city and large town of Britain there stood a handsome sanctuary for worship in which the gospel of free grace was sounded out with power, winsomeness and clarity!

The Sheffield example of perseverance reminds us of the pressing quandaries typical of well-attended churches in built-up areas. *There is no such thing as achieving every ideal.* For the friends at Sheffield notions about extra parking were a non-starter. By-laws can seem insuperable. Complex regulations impeded the architects. Another ideal was to achieve more space for what is a growing church. Maximum use of space was gained by the cantilever and extension to the rear providing considerable increase of floor area to seat 200. If needed, the foyer can be used to seat a further 40.

I have enjoyed observing churches develop like the one led by Steve Martin of Atlanta, Georgia. He was able to take his choice from thousands of acres for a new church. What a contrast with a built-up city area! As Adam had only one woman to marry, in the Lord's providence Wycliffe assembly had only one site. Now that one site has become a glorious testimony in Sheffield and beyond.

Russia Today

An interview with Roger Weil

How did your interest in Russia and Eastern Europe begin?

In 1963 I was introduced to a remarkable man, R C Thomson, then in his late seventies, but still strong in both mind and body. He was then undertaking lengthy journeys behind the Iron Curtain for periods of up to two months, visiting evangelical Christians in different countries. He was anxious to encourage others to join him in this ministry and evidently thought that I was suitable material. But at that time nothing could have been further from my mind! Together with others he had founded the *Slav Lands Christian Fellowship* in 1959.



Roger Weil on the right, with Russian Christians, Red Square, Moscow

In one of his books Charles Bridges quotes the words of Isaiah to emphasise the important truth that, in matters of guidance, God leads us by his own way, a way hidden from human sight and our own wisdom. So it was, in spite of my initial reluctance, I found myself in September 1965 standing on the platform of a railway station in Yugoslavia. Together with RCT we were waiting for the arrival of one of the local Christians who would take us to our hosts in the town. We had not waited long before a tall young man with a bright smile ran up to us and we were given the traditional Slavic hug and kiss of welcome! I felt certain that he was genuinely delighted to see us but for the moment I could not understand why. Our reception at the house where we were to stay was almost ecstatic – at least that's how it appeared to a middle-class Englishman like myself! Gradually it began to dawn on me that the reason for this was a spiritual one. Iron Curtain Christians were so grateful that their brethren in the West, with all its affluence and freedom, had not forgotten them and their needs. Our visit was a tangible expression of that concern and it was this that brought joy to their hearts. From that moment I felt my calling to visit God's people in Eastern Europe and Russia and do what little I could to encourage them in their work and witness.

How many times have you been to Russia?

Since my first visit in 1970 I have been there ten times. If I had not received a three year ban in 1980 I would most probably have travelled to the Soviet Union more frequently. I was foolish enough to protest at the injustice, as I saw it, of having my Russian Bibles confiscated at the border when they were beginning to be printed in Moscow. The customs were embarrassed at being challenged on a topic they knew nothing about – hence my three year ban!

What were the most striking features of your recent visit to Russia?

Undoubtedly the almost limitless opportunities for the gospel. Virtually all barriers to evangelism, publishing and church building have disappeared. Western missionary societies of all colours are beavering away training Russian young people in missionary work or, in some cases, doing it themselves with Russian interpreters. One mission from America is working in some State schools, under licence to the Government, teaching Christian morality and ethics. They plan to have more than one hundred staff members in posts in the near future.

Cities where there is no evangelical witness are visited by a Ukrainian evangelist with a huge circus tent. He holds a week of meetings in each place together with a team of native workers. Such things haven't been possible since the Revolution in 1917. Christian publishers in the West are now opening offices and warehouses in the big cities – even bookshops are beginning to appear. *The Slavic Gospel Association* has recently opened a printing works in Western Ukraine. American TV evangelists buy prime-time on Moscow and St Petersburg TV with voice dubbing – this is an example of the 'down-side' of the new spiritual activity that is being experienced. Healing evangelists hire theatres and preach their brand of the gospel to startled crowds who have never heard anything like this within living memory. *The New Tribes Mission* is sending its first (English) missionary to Siberia and doubtless there are many more such ventures that at the present time I am unaware of. Our own *International Fellowship of Evangelical Students* (IFES) has two young people working among university students in Minsk. Russian Christians in hundreds of towns have opened their own 'Street Libraries'. They lend what books they have been able to get their hands on to a curious public. I recently had a letter from a young man who was converted by receiving literature from one such library. There is even a Russian newspaper for Christians called *Protestant* which is published monthly in Moscow but distributed over a wide area. These are just a few of the good things which are happening at the present time.

Why do we have to be so careful about which books we choose to translate into Russian?

Because there has been no Christian literature in the Russian language within living memory the temptation is to think that we know best what is needed. How would we

react if, for example, a wealthy Korean Christian suddenly appeared in London on his first visit and informed us that he was about to launch a series of wonderful books that we needed to read? How could he possibly know the spiritual needs of a land he had never visited before and how, being a foreigner, could he make such decisions on behalf of a nation which in every way was quite different to his own? In secular circles this is called 'cultural imperialism'.

EELAC (*Eastern European Literature Advisory Committee*) have a depth of experience in this field having recently established indigenous publishing houses in five former Communist countries. Before proposing any titles for translation they recommend the following procedures;

1. Visit the country until you are reasonably familiar with its people and customs.
2. Meet the leaders of the main evangelical groups or churches to discuss their literature needs.
3. Speak not only to those leaders who understand English, but also, if possible, to those who do not.
4. Avoid the temptation of only speaking to those groups you know you will agree with!
5. Ask them to list the ten most urgent spiritual needs of their country.
6. Ask them to select the two most important ones which they would like to see implemented within the next two years. (Usually in practice – evangelistic books and those promoting spiritual leadership.)

After examining the information they have received EELAC make recommendations to the leaders they have met and obtain their agreement before proceeding to the translation. (This is where Reformed Christians in the West have the opportunity to make recommendations from the rich heritage they have been bequeathed.) They request advice as to the most suitable indigenous translators. Because the work of the translator is of crucial importance EELAC follow certain guide-lines;

1. Match the translator to the type of book.
2. Ensure he or she is a resident and not an ex-patriate!
3. The translator's work must be checked for correctness and fluency purely from the linguistic standpoint. Under no circumstances must the 'checker' see the English text. It must be considered solely for the authenticity of the language so that it reads like a Russian book and not like a translation from a foreign language!
4. The final product must be checked theologically to ensure previous editing has not altered the meaning of the original text.

As can be imagined, the present conditions in Russia mean that anyone with enough money and determination can short-circuit these wise procedures and fly straight to Moscow, hire professional translators and publish whatever they want! Whether it will ever be properly distributed or read by Russian Christians is, of course, highly unlikely. Too many evangelical people seem to be hypnotised by the desire for instant success and achievement, when a little more thought, research and common sense would, in the long run, produce the long-lasting results we all want to see.

Can you say something about *The Roundwood Trust*?

Under the good hand of God, John and Margaret Gudgeon were prompted to begin visiting Christians in Eastern Europe in 1990. They had already been interested in literature work here in Britain and their minister, Pastor Ramsbottom of Luton, wrote books for children. It was decided to translate some of these into Russian and a start was made with *The Miracles of Jesus* followed by *The Parables of Jesus*. Friends in Russia had publicised the tremendous need there was for children's literature so the Gudgeons knew they were answering a genuine cry for help. This was followed by *Christian Doctrines Simply Explained*. Originally this too was a children's book but it transpired that even adults and new believers in Russia enjoyed it: such is the spiritual condition of very many believers today. They had established contact with an unregistered church in Odessa who, in spite of their sufferings at the hands of the authorities, had printed the *Gospel of John* on a home-made underground printing press during the years of persecution. They were keen to open up their own literature ministry so *The Roundwood Trust*, as the Gudgeons now called themselves, decided to support them. A warehouse, bookshop and small-scale printing press were purchased and are now functioning. About fifteen members of the Odessa church now work in this literature ministry. At present the Trust has eighteen titles in Russian and eight in Rumanian, with a further four in Russian and two in Rumanian in preparation. Some of these books are printed in Singapore for economic reasons and are shipped straight to Odessa which is a large port on the Black Sea. This avoids all kinds of problems that are often encountered sending goods overland and through numerous customs controls. The Trust is keen to provide more doctrinal books and hopes to co-operate with me concerning such a book which I am preparing at the present time. One difficulty is that our Russian brethren have strong Arminian views and have never come across another viewpoint – it is difficult for them therefore to accept the doctrines of grace. There has been very little if any teaching as we understand it, so a new type of ministry of the Word is urgently needed. The Trust has also worked closely with the *Trinitarian Bible Society* in supplying Russian and Rumanian Bibles in these two countries. They also co-operate with *The Slav Lands Christian Fellowship* in helping Christians in Russia in various ways.

Recently BBC1 showed a 40 minute documentary on Vladimir Zhirinovsky with the title 'Call me Hitler', highlighting the enormous peril such a dictator would

be to his own country and the world at large. Have you any observations on this?

Some international correspondents have actually said that they think he is mad. When one listens to him it would not be difficult to come to a similar conclusion. However, politicians are notorious for their empty rhetoric, playing to the gallery or simply trying to frighten opponents into modifying their own policies. Politicians out of office have few luxuries, but one of them is not having to implement the policies they are trumpeting from the rooftops! The question is simply this: are we to take him seriously? Does he really believe, for instance, that the elimination of all foreigners and foreign influence from Russian soil will bring about an economic revolution which, in ten years, will be the envy of the Western world? Can he be serious? If however he does succeed Yeltsin as the next president, he is sufficiently xenophobic and unstable to be a very destabilising influence in world politics. If indeed he does use the Red Army to repossess the newly independent Republics of the former Soviet Union he may well find he has a 'Yugoslavia' on his hands. From the Christian perspective there is also cause for concern. The Orthodox Church believes itself to be the sole custodian of the true Russian spirit. Pre-1917 they preached that to secede from their Church was equivalent not only to be an apostate but also to deny one's Russian nationality. One became a stateless person by becoming a 'sectarian', for example a Baptist. It is true that in 1905 the Czar proclaimed liberty of conscience, but the folk-memory lingers on. Zhirinovsky with his ultra-nationalistic policies would find a willing ally in the Orthodox Church. It would love to banish all foreign missionaries and so would Zhirinovsky!

I pray daily for God to give peace, wise leadership and a measure of economic prosperity to the whole of Russia in its widest sense. I pray too for the conversion or elimination of Zhirinovsky, see 1 Timothy 2:1 and 2.

Why is there a shortage of Bibles in Russia today in view of the millions being published currently in the West?

Firstly it should be remembered that the population of the former Soviet Union is approximately 284 million. Although not all of these are Russian they will be Russian-speaking so the demand for Russian Bibles is considerable. Secondly, I know from first-hand experience that even in large cities distribution is very poor. Small towns and villages say that there is simply nothing available – remember the vast distances and poor communications in this context. Thirdly, from letters received we know that people in many places hardly have enough money to eat; they have nothing for clothing so of course cannot afford a Bible even when they are available. The economic plight of millions is desperate. What suffering the Russian people have endured throughout their turbulent history! O that it might end! Pray along the lines Paul recommends in the text quoted above for this troubled land, that good days and gospel blessing might come from God's gracious hand.

On Friendship

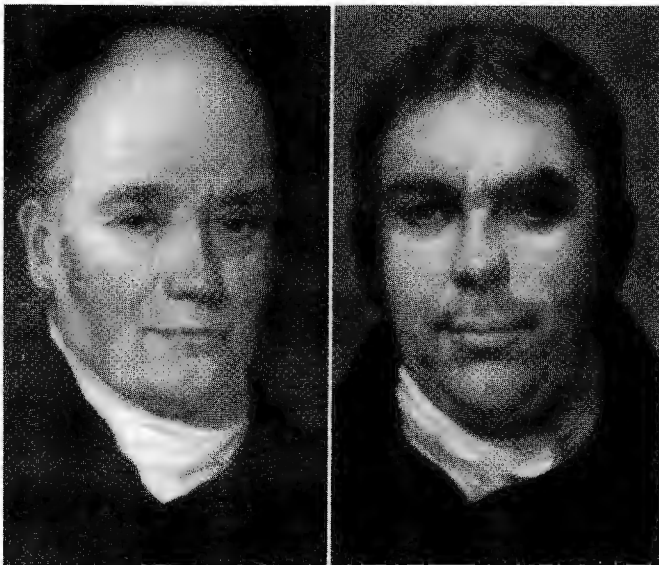
Michael A G Haykin

Friendship: its importance

In C S Lewis' *The Screwtape Letters*, that ingenious commentary on spiritual warfare from the point of view of our Enemy, there is one letter from the senior devil, Screwtape, to his nephew Wormwood in which Screwtape rejoices over the fact that 'in modern Christian writings' there is to be found 'few of the old warnings about worldly vanities, the choice of friends, and the value of time'.¹ Now, whether or not Lewis is right with regard to a scarcity of twentieth-century literature about 'worldly vanities' and 'the value of time', he is undoubtedly correct when it comes to the topic of friendship. Our century has seen very little attention given in Christian quarters to reflection on the significance of friendship and its leading characteristics. Indeed, this is one area where past centuries, both distant and more recent, display far more wisdom than the present one.

In the ancient world, for instance, friendship was deemed to be of such vital importance that Plato devoted one of his dialogues, the *Lysis*, as well as substantial portions of two other dialogues, the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium*, to a treatment of its nature. Aristotle, the other leading thinker of the classical Greek period, also considered the topic of friendship significant enough to have a discussion of it occupy two of the ten books of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, his major work on ethical issues. For classical Greek thought – and this is true also of later Roman thinking – friendship formed one of the highest ideals of human life. Moreover, it is instructive to observe that the spread of the Church throughout the Roman Empire in the centuries immediately after the death and resurrection of Christ did not negate this rich appreciation of friendship. Despite the Christian emphasis on showing love to all men and women – family, friends, acquaintances, even enemies – friendship continued to be highly valued. In fact, the emphasis placed on the unity in Christ of all Christians encouraged a high degree of spiritual intimacy that resembled, and even surpassed, the intimacy considered by Graeco-Roman paganism to be essential to the experience of genuine friendship.²

Gregory of Nazianzus, a leading fourth-century Greek Christian theologian, could thus write of his friendship with Basil of Caesarea during their time together as students in Athens in the 350s: 'In studies, in lodgings, in discussions I had him as companion... We had all things in common... But above all it was God, of course, and a mutual desire for higher things, that drew us to each other. As a result we reached such a pitch of confidence that we revealed the depths of our hearts, becoming ever more united in our yearning.'³ Given this estimation of friendship, it is no surprise that Gregory could also state: 'If anyone were to ask me, "What is the best thing in life?", I would answer, "Friends".'⁴



John Ryland and Andrew Fuller by courtesy of Regent's Park College, Oxford

The importance of friendship in the Christian life was still being felt intensely and being talked about down to the early part of the modern era. Esther Burr, living in colonial New Jersey in the mid-eighteenth century, could unequivocally declare: 'Nothing is more refreshing to the soul (except communication with God himself), than the company and society of a friend.'⁵ The wife of Aaron Burr who was the president of what would in time become Princeton University, and the mother of two small children, Esther earnestly sought to know the presence of God in the hurly-burly of her daily life. As she did so, she came to appreciate the fact that friends are a divine gift. Writing in her diary on January 23, 1756, she was convinced that it is 'a great mercy that we have any friends – What would this life be without 'em – A person who looks upon himself to be friendless must of all creatures be miserable in this life', for friendship, she added, is 'the life of life'.⁶

These convictions regarding friendship were challenged the following year, when one of the college tutors, a Mr Ewig, told her that 'he did not think women knew what friendship was', since they 'were hardly capable of anything so cool and rational as friendship'! Esther lost no time in rubbing his views. As she wrote in her diary: 'I retorted several severe things upon him before he had time to speak again. He blushed and seemed confused. ...We carried on the dispute for an hour – I talked him quite silent.'⁷ Esther had evidently learned much from living in the house and under the tutelage of the greatest American theologian of the century, namely her father, Jonathan Edwards.

The friendship of Ryland and Fuller

A later eighteenth-century individual who seems to have fully shared Esther's convictions about the vital necessity of good friends was John Ryland, Jr, and it is his thoughts on the subject that will occupy the rest of this article. From 1781 to 1793, Ryland was involved in the pastoral leadership of College Lane Baptist Church in Northampton. In 1793 he was called to be pastor of Broadmead Baptist Church in Bristol, England, as well as the principal of Bristol Baptist Academy, both positions being held concurrently. He stayed in these offices till his death in 1825.⁸ Now, all of the institutions in which Ryland served were part of the Calvinistic Baptist denomination in Great Britain, the major Baptist grouping of that era. This denomination had emerged from the womb of Puritanism in the mid-seventeenth century and was distinguished by a commitment to Calvinism, congregational church government and believer's baptism.

Among Ryland's life-long friends was Andrew Fuller, who was the pastor of Kettering Baptist Church, Northamptonshire, from 1782 to 1815 and a prolific writer of theological works. Ryland and Fuller first met in 1778 when both of them were young men and they were wrestling with a number of extremely important theological issues. Within a year they were the closest of friends. After Fuller moved to Kettering in 1782 the two of them had frequent opportunities to talk, to pray and to spend time together, for Northampton and Kettering are only thirteen miles apart. Their friendship was to be unbroken for the next thirty-seven years, till Fuller's death in 1815. Nine days before he died, Fuller asked one last request of Ryland: would he preach his funeral sermon? Ryland agreed, though it was no easy task to hold back his tears as he spoke.⁹ Towards the end of this sermon, Ryland reminisced about the fact that their friendship had 'never met with one minute's interruption, by one unkind word or thought, of which I have any knowledge' and that the wound caused by the loss of 'this most faithful and judicious friend' was something that would never be healed in this life.¹⁰

Friendship: its cost

The year following Fuller's death, Ryland published a biography of his close friend. In the introduction, he stated the following about their friendship: 'Most of our common acquaintance are well aware that I was his oldest and most intimate friend and though my removal to Bristol, above twenty years ago, placed us at a distance from each other, yet constant correspondence was all along maintained; and, to me at least, it seemed a tedious interval if more than a fortnight elapsed without my receiving a letter from him.'¹¹

When Ryland moved to Bristol in 1793 he was no longer close enough to his friend in Kettering for them to meet on a regular basis. The only way that they could keep their friendship alive and intact was through the medium of the letter. Thus, for more than twenty years, they faithfully corresponded with one another, and Ryland notes, if he did not hear from Fuller at least once every two weeks he found it 'tedious', that

is, painful and upsetting.¹² Both Ryland and Fuller knew that their friendship was a fragile treasure, that could be easily lost or neglected in the rush of life if they did not give it the attention it needed. As Haddon Robinson has recently noted: ‘Even strong friendships require watering or they shrivel up and blow away.’¹³

Friendship – warts and all

What had originally attracted Ryland and Fuller to one another was the discovery that they shared ‘a strong attachment to the same religious principles, a decided aversion to the same errors, a predilection for the same authors’,¹⁴ in particular, Esther Burr’s father, Jonathan Edwards. In other words, they had that fundamental aspect of a good friendship: things in common. But friends are not Siamese twins or clones of one another. It belongs to the essence of genuine friendships that friends accept one another for what they are, warts and all.¹⁵ In the case of Ryland and Fuller their main difference of opinion revolved around what was an extremely volatile issue among eighteenth-century English-speaking Baptists: the issue of open and closed communion, and open and closed membership. In the eighteenth century the vast majority of pastors and congregations in the Calvinistic Baptist denomination, including Fuller, adhered to a policy of closed membership – that is, only baptised believers could become members of their local churches – and closed communion – that is, only baptised believers could partake of the Lord’s Supper in their meeting-houses. Ryland, on the other hand was of the conviction that both the Lord’s Supper and membership in the local church should be open to all Christians, regardless of whether or not they had been baptised as believers. He was thus committed to a policy of both open communion and open membership. When Ryland was the pastor of College Lane in Northampton, for instance, one of the leading deacons of the church, a certain Thomas Trinder, did not receive believer’s baptism until six years after he had been appointed deacon.¹⁶ Fuller would never have tolerated such a situation in the church at Kettering. But the two men were secure enough in their friendship to disagree and not have it destroy their friendship. As Ryland later said on their difference of opinion: ‘I repeatedly expressed myself more freely and strongly to him, than I did to any man in England, yet without giving him offence.’¹⁷

We are all subject to the temptation to make our views about secondary matters far more important than they actually are and to squeeze our friends into our own mould when it comes to these non-essential issues. Fuller and Ryland, on the other hand, genuinely knew how to give each other space to disagree on what many of their Baptist acquaintances regarded as an all-essential issue. In so doing they revealed that they were seeking to shape their friendship along the lines of that old adage: ‘In things essential, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity.’¹⁸

The one essential friendship

When Fuller lay dying in April, 1815, he was asked if he wanted to see Ryland, his oldest living friend. His response was terse: ‘He can do me no good.’¹⁹ His reply

seems to be an odd statement, lacking in all appreciation for what their friendship had meant to the two men. But it needs to be understood in context. In his final letter to Ryland, Fuller began by saying: 'We have enjoyed much together, which I hope will prove an earnest of greater enjoyment in another world. ...[There] I trust we shall meet, and part no more.'²⁰ Clearly his feelings about his friendship with Ryland had undergone no alteration whatsoever. In the light of his impending death, however, there was only one friendship which he knew to be needful in that moment: his friendship with the Triune God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. As another eighteenth-century writer, an Anglican rector by the name of James Newton, had written when faced with the death of his brother: 'If we have God for our friend, what need we fear? Nothing, but without his friendship we may be looked on as the most miserable of men.'²¹

Footnotes

- 1 *The Best of C S Lewis, The Screwtape Letters*, Letter 10, Canon Press, Washington DC, 1969, p43.
- 2 Carolinne White, *Christian Friendship in the Fourth Century*, Cambridge University Press, 1992, p57.
- 3 *De vita sua* 225ff. [trans. Denise Molaise Meehan, *Saint Gregory of Nazianzus; Three Poems (The Fathers of the Church*, vol 75, The Catholic University of America Press, Washington DC, 1987), pp83-84].
- 4 Cited, White, *Christian Friendship*, p70.
- 5 *The Journal of Esther Edwards Burr, 1754-1757*, eds. Carol F Karlsen and Laurie Crumpacker, Yale University Press, New Haven/London, 1984, p185.
- 6 *Ibid* p185. The spelling and capitalisation of this and the next quote from Esther's diary have been modernised.
- 7 *Ibid* p257.
- 8 For overviews of Ryland's life and ministry, see especially J E Ryland, 'Memoir' in *Pastoral Memorials: Selected from the Manuscripts of the Late Revd. John Ryland, DD*, B J Holdsworth, London, 1826, I pp1-56; *The Three Rylands: A Hundred Years of various Christian Service*, Elliott Stock, London, 1897, pp67-91.
- 9 See remarks at the beginning of the sermon: John Ryland, *The Indwelling and Righteousness of Christ no Security against Corporeal Death, but the Source of Spiritual and Eternal Life*, W Button & Son, London, 1815, pp1-2.
- 10 *Ibid* pp36-37
- 11 *The Work of Faith, the Labour of Love and the Patience of Hope, illustrated in the Life and Death of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 2nd Ed., Button & Son, London, 1818, viii-ix.
- 12 For this now obsolete meaning of the word 'tedious' see *The Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v.
- 13 'Laughing the Night Away', *Christianity Today*, 37, No 3, March 8, 1993, p15.
- 14 Ryland, *The Indwelling and Righteousness of Christ*, p35.
- 15 Maurice Roberts, 'Christian Friendships' in his *The Thought of God*, The Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 1993, p175.
- 16 Grant Gordon, 'The Call of Dr John Ryland Jr', *The Baptist Quarterly*, 24 (1991-1992) 217.
- 17 *Life and Death of the Rev Andrew Fuller*, ix-x.
- 18 Roberts, 'Christian Friendships', pp174-175.
- 19 *Life and Death of the Rev Andrew Fuller*, p356.
- 20 *The Indwelling and Righteousness of Christ*, p33.
- 21 Diary entry for 2 January 1759, [*The Deserted Village. The Diary of an Oxfordshire Rector: James Newton of Nuneham Courtenay 1736-86*, transcribed and ed. Gavin Hannah (Stroud, Gloucestershire/Dover, New Hampshire: Alan Sutton, 1992), 2].

Shattering the Myth of Darwinism

The Facts of Life - Shattering the Myth of Darwinism, Richard Milton, Fourth Estate, London, 269 Westbourne Grove, London W11 2QA UK, 1992. 267 pp hardback, £16.99 Also published in paperback by Corgi at £4.99.

A review article

Richard Milton is a secular journalist who writes from a scientific point of view. He does not belong to any religious group and maintains he is agnostic as to how the world came into being. No one can say that he has a religious axe to grind.

Recently two leg bones, purported to be very old, were discovered in the South of England. Out of two leg bones it is possible to imagine almost anything that walks. The popular media, hungry to confirm the popular mythology, even drew a portrait of the face of the owner of the two leg bones. It is unusual for anyone to challenge seriously this kind of absurdity. Richard Milton does so head-on. He disputes the notion that the earth is billions of years old. He cites an example in which it was claimed that an item was billions of years old but then revised to only 190 years old! He shows that all the evidence is against species changing by selection, and underlines the fact that the trouble with missing links is that they *are* missing.

Why should we be interested in a book of this kind? We believe in the biblical testimony. We hold to the view that, while knowledge is vast, in many realms of science experts know nothing about origins. As the Lord said to Job; 'Where were you when I laid the foundations of

the earth?' Milton's book is useful as it can be used to show how scientists contradict each other and that evolutionary theory is unreliable. In this field it is not a question of whether a scientist is a Christian or not. Rather all research in this particular sphere is uncertain and subject to correction. Even if it could be proved that the world was created according to Genesis chapter one that would not convince a mind at enmity against God (Rom 8:7). Until he is liberated by regeneration the sinner will, by nature, always seek to suppress the knowledge of our Creator, everywhere displayed, from the vast heavens to the minute insect world (Rom 1:18-20).

In addition to pointing to source materials which show the fallacy of evolution, Milton exposes the intellectual arrogance of evolutionary advocates such as Thomas Huxley, draws attention to the kinship that Darwinian philosophy holds with tenets of Nazism, and comments on the outrage expressed by evolutionists when their bubbles are pricked with the needle of reality.

This book should be used to oppose teaching of evolution on mass media and in our schools and universities. At first there may be derision as Goliath mocked the young David. But mocking befits fools who will not face up to the facts.

William Carey

William Carey, S Pearce Carey, The Wakeman Trust (UK Registered Charity), 5 Templar Street, London SE5 9JB, 1993. 413 pages large size hardback, 17cm by 24cm, as against the usual demy octavo size of 15cm by 22.5cm.

A review article

This sturdily bound, beautifully printed volume is a joy to handle. It is illustrated throughout, has attractive end-papers and comes with a handsome, full colour portrait of Carey on the dust cover. The work is divided into two parts, 1. Carey's Thirty-Two English years, (126 pages), and 2. Carey's Forty Indian Years (287 pages). I will give three reasons why I value this book.

Firstly, this biography is valuable for serious historians. It provides an accurate, balanced, comprehensively detailed description of the way in which a very poor self-educated man with no special privileges was enabled by the mighty power of the Holy Spirit to persevere through seemingly impossible obstacles: theological prejudice, political opposition, economic stringency, domestic tribulation and linguistic complexity.

Secondly, this book has exceptional inspirational value. The late author was a brilliant biographer, neither stilted nor wordy. The narrative is gripping from the outset. S Pearce Carey (1862-1953) was a great-grandson of the missionary and a distinguished Baptist minister. His aptitude for allowing his subjects to speak for themselves is excellent. For instance it is deeply moving to read the details of the severity of the illness of

Carey's first wife in India and observe the patient and tender way in which Carey responded to that trial. Another example is to realise, almost as if at first hand, the shock of the destruction of the printing factory by fire in 1812, and then to see the courage of the missionaries as they responded to that staggering loss. The sheer extent and quality of the work accomplished by Carey, Marshman, Ward and their team of workers comes through powerfully.

Thirdly, this book is practical as a means of promoting positive missionary endeavour. It illustrates the obstacles that inevitably block the way but which must be tackled. The call to pioneer missionary work to reach the unreached people groups of the world is as pressing now as it was in 1800. Exploration has shown the world to be a much larger place than it was imagined to be in 1800. The call to serve abroad is pressing and urgent. Note Mozambique as an example (see news). Today short-term work can be very encouraging and effective (again see Kenya in news section). Such contact multiplies the possibility of service abroad. The demand for church planters, translators and specialist workers of every kind is paramount. This kind of biography is enormously stimulating and quickening. The publishers are to be congratulated.

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