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254

Websites www.reformation-today.org

The editor's personal website is <http://www.errollhulse.com>

<http://africanpastorsconference.com>



Interior of Grace and Truth Church, in Israel.



Reaching a village in Kalimantan by motorbike see page 29.

Front cover picture. *Grace and Truth Church, Israel.*

Editorial

MY PURPOSE IN THIS EDITORIAL IS TO POINT READERS TO RELEVANT ISSUES WHICH THEY MIGHT MISS OR MISUNDERSTAND.

With regard to Gay Marriage and the House of Lords the opening section of the Gay Marriage Bill drives a wedge between Church canon law and State law. The State and the Established Church will have separate definitions of marriage (Marriage, Same Sex Couples, Bill, Clause 1:3). Given that the Church conducts weddings on behalf of the State, it's a recipe for disestablishment. That's why the Church of England called this proposal one of the greatest threats in its 500 year history.

Readers will need to have that in mind when they read about disestablishment. Warning: the supine showing of the Archbishop of Canterbury and some of the bishops can give you a tummy ache.

Most relevant material has been added to the RT website. Prof Andy MacIntosh goes head-to-head with leading atheists and evolutionists. Do not be discouraged if at first reading you do not understand some of the terminology. A glossary of terms is provided at the conclusion.

Always relevant is the binding nature of the Great Commission. Searching questions are asked at the conclusion of the biography of John Eliot. Does your church really care about the Great Commission? Does missionary concern reflect in the support of front-line missionary effort to reach unreached people groups? Has your church adopted an unreached people group?

Finally in everything that we attempt for Christ's kingdom we have eternity in view. The first article reminds us of that. It is also expressed at the end of the article by Mostyn Roberts: 'We are longing for Christ's return and believe in revival. Whatever our framework for the last things (and Reformed Christians would differ: most would be amillennialist or postmillennialist and have confidence in the flourishing of the gospel in this age, even if we do not all hold to the optimistic views of many of the Puritans or Jonathan Edwards). We look to Christ's return for the ultimate demonstration of his glory, our own glorification with him, and the completion of his work of redemption.'

A Lost Eternity?

Nigel T Faithfull

WE ARE LIVING IN AN AGE OF EUPHEMISMS. INSTEAD OF CALLING A LIE WHAT IT IS, POLITICIANS SPEAK OF being 'economical with the truth'. We may point an accusing finger, but has this culture of lessening the gravity of offending issues also entered the evangelical pulpit? I am speaking about the common practice of evangelical and reformed preachers referring to hell as 'a lost eternity'. We should ask ourselves, however, whether this phrase 'a lost eternity' is a biblical expression. It doesn't, in fact, occur in the Bible at all, and even the word 'eternity' only occurs once in the AV in Isaiah 57:15: 'For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity ...', and three times in the NIV (e.g. Ps. 93:2: '... you are from all eternity'). In 1985 R T Kendall wrote: 'I fear that ours is a generation that has seen less preaching of the message of hell than any generation in the history of the Christian Church.'¹

Ambiguity

The phrase 'a lost eternity', besides not occurring in the Scriptures, is also capable of being understood in two ways. It could mean that those who reject the message of the gospel end up by losing any conscious eternal existence, whether a blessed eternity in heaven, or separated from the presence of God. Traditional evangelicals might want this expression to just refer to an eternal consciousness of 'lostness' - but would an unbeliever appreciate this distinction? If 'a lost eternity', although not found in the Bible, represented a true scriptural doctrine, then it would be allowable. Thus although the words 'the Trinity' are not found in Scripture, they truly describe the biblical descriptions of the Godhead, but that is not the case with the expression 'a lost eternity'.

Why do believers use such an expression rather than 'hell' when preaching or just speaking about the gospel to friends? There is an embarrassment - a fear of offending; perhaps a wish not to make the Lord Jesus appear harsh and unloving. The next stage to feeling an objection to speaking about a future of eternal torment for unbelievers, is to adopt the teaching of conditional immortality, and reckon we are still retaining our evangelical credentials.

Conditional immortality

I owe a great deal to the writings of John Stott, particularly the clear reasoning

in his early book *Basic Christianity* (1958). It was much later in *Evangelical Essentials* (Inter Varsity, 1988) a Liberal-Evangelical dialogue, that Stott mooted his tentative belief in ‘conditional immortality’, whereby unbelievers are considered not to have received the gift of immortality, and therefore do not live for ever. This is essentially annihilationism, regarding the eventual fate of unbelievers. Some conditionalists hold that unbelievers lose conscious existence at the moment of death, others that after the Judgment Day they will have a limited period of punishment depending on the seriousness of their wickedness. Two of the great gospel preachers of the nineteenth century, the Baptist Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-1892), and the Anglican Bishop of Liverpool, John Charles Ryle (1816-1900), had no problem with this issue, as we shall see next.

Spurgeon and Ryle

Spurgeon said: ‘I do not wonder that ingenious persons have invented theories which aim at mitigating the terrors of the world to come to the impenitent. It is natural they should do so, for the facts are so alarming as they are truthfully given us in God’s Word, that if we desire to preach comfortable doctrine and such as will quiet the consciences of idle professors, we must dilute the awful truth ... What better pillow for idle heads than the doctrine that the finally impenitent become extinct?’²

Ryle also saw the danger: ‘Once let the old doctrine about hell be overthrown and the whole system of Christianity is unsettled, unscrewed, unpinned and thrown into disorder.’³ He found the doctrine of hell had no hindering effect on his mission statement: ‘My chief desire in all my writings is to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ and make Him beautiful and glorious in the eyes of men; and to promote the increase of repentance, faith, and holiness upon earth.’

What does perish mean?

Conditional or annihilation views have mainly arisen from two considerations. The first is the way the word ‘destruction’ is used in the Old Testament regarding God’s enemies. The burning sulphur which destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah eliminated these cities – they did not burn for ever. The argument then suggests that in the same way the lives of unbelievers are eventually made extinct. This view ignores the fact that the buildings of a city have no immortal soul, unlike the person who, although rebelling against God from birth to death, nevertheless has been made a spiritual (albeit fallen) being in the image of God, and has had the breath of an immortal life breathed by God into their bodies (Gen 2:7).

We are offered eternal and everlasting life in contrast to perishing (John 3:16). The immediate context of a word is vital to its interpretation, as also its wider context in comparison with other scriptures. The context here is a contrast between perishing and having everlasting life. Although it does not say 'everlasting perishing', that could be inferred from the immediate context and confirmed from our Lord's own words on the subject. Even in this famous gospel text there is a balance between speaking of both heaven and hell.

Annihilationists are eager to point out that the definition of 'perish' is to be destroyed, or to suffer death or ruin, from the Latin *perire*, to pass away. They also point out that when the wicked in the Old Testament were threatened with judgment, they were said to perish, i.e. be annihilated: 'Between dawn and dusk they are broken to pieces: unnoticed, they perish for ever' (Job 4:20); also 'But the wicked will perish: the Lord's enemies will be like the beauty of the fields, they will vanish – vanish like smoke' (Ps 37:20). Yet all references to perishing seem to refer to how death appears from man's point of view: a disappearing from this earth, returning to the dust and eventually being forgotten. Isaiah comments on the fate of the wicked: 'They are now dead, they live no more; those departed spirits do not rise. You punished them and brought them to ruin; you wiped out all memory of them' (Isa 26:14). This cannot be equated with a loss of conscious existence, and we need to refer to our Lord's teaching, where he used such terrifying pictures as being eaten by undying worms, or suffering in an eternally burning lake of fire (Mark 9:43-44; Luke 16:22-24; Rev 21:8).

How could God ...?

Secondly, there is the misconception that the love and justice of God seem to be denied by the thought that he could not only instigate the everlasting conscious torment of human beings, but apparently hide this threatened punishment over several thousand years of Old Testament history, and only reveal it in a few verses of New Testament text. Surely, they say, that is an unfair lack of warning to unbelieving Israel, and an inadequate one to the world after the coming of Christ. We will consider this below.

Life and immortality

In Exodus 3:6 God said to Moses, 'I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.' Jesus refers to this title used by God when speaking of the resurrection in Matthew 22:32: 'He is not the God of the dead but of the living.' Now we can see it refers to the resurrection, but it had been veiled until 'the appearing of our Saviour, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the

gospel' (2 Tim 1:10). We have to accept that God did not choose to reveal certain details of the resurrection, judgment, second coming and heaven and hell to the Old Testament saints, but reserved them to be declared by the Son and his apostles.

The testimony of Christ and his apostles

It is hardly surprising that a study in the Old Testament of the fate of believers and unbelievers after death is far from easy. The apostle Paul told Titus (Titus 1:2-3) that he wrote for the elect to have 'a faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time; and at his appointed season he brought his word to light through the preaching entrusted to me ...' Beginning with the coming of Christ, the 'appointed season' had now arrived for a clearer presentation of the facts concerning the after-life. Both the gospel of salvation and the judgment day, with the separation of sheep and goats, would be brought into a clearer focus. Peter acknowledges as he looks forward to glory that 'we have the word of the prophets made more certain; and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns, and the morning star rises in your hearts' (2 Peter 1:19).

The great price

To accuse God of cruelty for allowing torment in hell is to ignore both God's grace and the dire predicament all men are born into. God had no other way of rescuing man to dwell in heaven with him for ever than that of punishing his dear Son, who had committed no sin whatsoever. Christ even prayed for God to find another way, 'if it is possible' (Matt 26:39; Mark 14:36). God's nature could not allow any other method to reconcile his justice with his mercy and grace. If we start by understanding the great price God had to pay for our salvation, all thoughts on the cruelty of hell will evaporate. This is the gospel message of salvation from an eternal hell that must be proclaimed without any fear of embarrassment.

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1. Kendall, Robert T, *God Meant it for Good*, Authentic Media, 2008 reprint of 1986 edition, p 109.
 2. Spurgeon Charles H, *Compassion for Souls*, Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, Vol. 17, p 77, 1871.
See <http://www.spurgeon.org/sermons/0974.htm>
 3. Ryle, John C, cited in John Blanchard, *The Complete Gathered Gold*, Evangelical Press, 2007, pp 296-7.

Gay Marriage and the House of Lords

THE FOLLOWING LETTER WAS POSTED TO 29 PEERS considered likely to heed the concerns expressed. These included Lord Dannatt who subsequently spoke eloquently against the manner in which this legislation is being forced upon us.

Dear Lord Dannatt,

We are a group of 30 Christian ministers of different denominations leading churches in Yorkshire.

We are deeply concerned about the government's Same-Sex Marriage Bill for the following reasons.

Firstly, as Christian ministers, we note that the Coalition proposes to redefine the most important social structure ever known to humankind. Along with other Christians (as well as those in many other faith communities of Britain) we believe that God created marriage to be the union of a man and a woman.

Secondly, looking at the example of countries which have introduced same-sex marriage, we regard the so-called 'protections' offered to ministers and places of religion as unreliable. In Canada, since 2005, there have been numerous cases of litigation against Christians who

do not accept that same-sex unions are equivalent to man-woman marriage. One government minister there, indeed, has suggested that the Catholic Church will have to 'change its teaching' on biblical morality. We believe that this legislation will, in practice, be used as a means by which our freedom to preach and teach biblical morality will be undermined.

Thirdly, we are concerned for the civil liberties of all individuals who cannot, in conscience, agree that same-sex unions are the equivalent of man-woman marriage. Already there have been cases of discrimination against those who have expressed this belief, even privately. For example in 2010, Adrian Smith, a housing officer, was demoted and given a 40% pay cut for placing a reasonably worded opinion on marriage on a private face-book page. A High Court judge has since ruled that Mr Smith had done nothing wrong. But he has not been reinstated. We know that many teachers and public sector workers with traditional views are worried about their position, and the bill offers them no firm protection.

Fourthly, we are anxious about the implications for charities, voluntary organisations and marriage-counselling services. The bill offers no protection for them either. Many of

these are run by Christian volunteers with a strong belief in man-woman marriage. Rather than risk legal challenge, many such voluntary organisations may well close down. It is the vulnerable and needy who will suffer.

We, and the people in our churches are not 'bigoted' or 'homophobic'. We represent the mainstream of Christian teaching. And yet government ministers have sown social discord by publicly suggesting that our views have no place today. This 'new' intolerance will only get worse if this ill-conceived legislation, which has not been properly debated or scrutinised, is passed.

We would, therefore, appeal to you to reject this bill.

Yours sincerely,

Kevin Bidwell

Chairman of Yorkshire Reformed Ministers' Fraternal

The House of Lords

Here is a report by an observer of the debate that took place all in the House of Lords on Tuesday 4th June.

I was present in the House of Lords on Monday 3rd and Tuesday 4th June. Predictably, to listen to the whole debate on the Same-Sex Marriage Bill gave a very different picture from that presented by the media afterwards.

A long series of devastating criticisms were made of the bill: including the principle of the bill; the process by which it has been pushed through Parliament so far; and the many unintended consequences that might follow. There were some stunning speeches. The highlight, for me, was hearing Lord Dannatt, former Chief of the General Staff of the British Army, arguing that the way the bill had been pushed through has been an abuse of democracy. He said (among many other things!): 'Following due process and procedure is a principle that I spent the 40 years of my professional life upholding. We fought for the ballot box for 38 years in Northern Ireland. We stood for democracy against Communism for 44 years in Europe. We stood for the democratic rights of self-determination in the Falklands in 1982 and we still do. And now as a Parliamentarian I am asked to accept an abuse of the democratic process and I will not do it.'

There were other powerful speeches, and at times, for those in the Chamber, the 'mood' was with Lord Dear. If the vote had been held late on Monday evening, Lord Dear's motion might have carried. But, on Tuesday afternoon, the Chamber filled with hundreds of peers who hadn't been there for the debate. They just turned up to vote down Lord Dear's amendment, and get the bill through to the next stage.

During the debate it was predictable, but tragic, to hear many peers boasting of their Christian credentials, and claiming that God supports gay marriage. It was sad to see some of these who turned up right at the end openly mocking Lord Dear as he made his closing case.

Equally, it was encouraging to hear people with clarity and courage making the case for real marriage. It was good to hear peers quoting many of the arguments that have been put forward by C4M in their various briefings. It was telling that numbers of peers observed that they had been inundated with correspondence on the subject, the great majority of it deeply hostile to the bill. It was good to know that so many did take the opportunity to write to peers. Some peers did draw the conclusion that if this legislation is pushed through, there will be a price to pay in terms of social cohesion (a large section of the population will be marginalised for their sincere beliefs).

In the end 148 peers voted with Lord Dear. It's worth pointing out that numbers of other peers had stated that they were completely opposed to the bill in principle, but that they still would not vote with Lord Dear, for a variety of reasons. There is a strong current of opinion in the Lords which will keep fighting the bill, and, at the least, attempt to secure stronger protections. Churches which meet in rented premises, for example,

could be immediately vulnerable unless better protections are given. We need to be thankful for those in both Houses of Parliament who are very determined to maintain pressure against the bill.

I was glad to be in the Chamber over two days to witness the courage and clarity of Lord Dear and many others, but, equally, it was deeply sad for me to witness many times in which the name of Christ was dishonoured by those who inconsistently claimed his support for gay marriage.

I came away more convinced than ever that at a time when so many are willing to believe lies, we must go on telling the truth, whatever the consequences. From the time that this bill was introduced, both the government and the media, effectively want people to 'shut up' about it. They want to give the impression that the debate is over; there's no point at all in trying to argue that marriage should only be between a man and a woman. Does that mean we should stop telling the truth? Surely the opposite is the case.

The role of the Church of England

Currently, twenty-five Anglican Bishops have the right to sit in the House of Lords. Only four of them gave speeches. Fewer than half of them turned up to vote. Right up until the vote there was doubt as to how they would vote: the word was that their officials were pushing them

to abstain. In the end, eight current bishops voted with Lord Dear against the bill.

While an excellent part was played in the debate by a former primate, Lord George Carey, sadly the speech by the new Archbishop of Canterbury was a text-book example of Anglicanism (hedging your bets). Justin Welby did offer welcome criticisms of the bill. He argued that effectively the legislation would abolish, redefine and recreate marriage. But he neatly balanced that criticism, by commending the 'strong and welcome contribution' to the debate by the Bishop of Salisbury (who had compared resisting gay marriage to endorsing apartheid or slavery). He grovelled to the government, profusely thanking them for taking on board the concerns of the Church of England. He leaned over backwards to state his own support of the legitimacy of same-sex sexual unions. This balancing act of a speech concluded: 'And so with much regret, I cannot support the Bill as it stands.' This was not the voice of a preacher or a prophet! It was the nuanced voice of a consummate Anglican politician.

The Church of England has, since the debate in the Lords, signalled that it will no longer oppose the progress of the Same-Sex Marriage Bill. It will simply work to improve amendments.

But same-sex 'marriage' is not marriage! The right thing to do

is to go on opposing this piece of legislation. It is not law yet. If it does become law, the right thing to do is to go on telling the truth about marriage – that it is, can only be, and in reality will only be, the complementary union of a man and a woman.

If the bill does become law, it would possibly lead to the disestablishment of the Church of England. There would be a contradiction between the definition of marriage as promulgated by the State, and that promulgated by the 'established' Church. This would be an untenable situation. But, as evidenced on Monday and Tuesday 3rd and 4th June, 'established' Christianity does biblical Christianity no favours at all. It brings the gospel of Christ into disrepute when TV audiences see robed bishops meekly submitting to scolding by ungodly peers rather than rising up to denounce them. The New Testament gives no support to the notion of 'established', state-sponsored 'Christianity'.

We must go on resisting this iniquitous bill while there is opportunity. We must not buy into the lie of inevitability (for reasons why see RT 253 page 27ff). If, tragically, it does become law, it might well have the consequence of bringing establishment to an end. And for that we would weep no tears. It would bring to an end a whole system of 'pageantry-like-faith' that obscures and confuses gospel Christianity rather than promoting it.

What does 'Reformed' mean?

Mostyn Roberts

YOU MAY BE AN EVANGELICAL AND BE AN ANGLICAN, BAPTIST, PRESBYTERIAN, BRETHREN OR OTHER. YOU may be Calvinist or Arminian.

But we generally need more agreement on points of theology and worship if we are to live and serve together as a church.

One of the ways in which churches identify themselves is by calling themselves 'Reformed'.

So - what does 'Reformed' mean?

Historically the name comes from the period of the Reformation: 'Reformed' churches were those that followed Calvin rather than Luther. It is broadly accurate therefore to say that 'Reformed' is equivalent to 'Calvinistic'. Men who studied under Calvin or his successors in Geneva brought the Reformed faith back to Britain where it took root in Scotland under John Knox and among the 'Puritans' in England and Wales. Other countries in northern and eastern Europe were influenced as well, such as France (where the Reformed were called Huguenots), the Netherlands, Poland and Hungary. In the seventeenth century the Puritans took Calvinism to the USA and in the eighteenth it was the theology of great revival preachers such as Jonathan Edwards in New England and George Whitefield, Howell Harries, Daniel Rowland and many others in Britain.

Some argue that if to be Reformed is truly to be Calvinistic, then Baptists have no right to call themselves Reformed. Baptists in the seventeenth century however would have disagreed vigorously, for the stronger branch of Baptists at that time was the Particular Baptists who in 1689 produced the *Second London Confession of Faith* (the first had appeared in 1644). This was consciously drafted to show that on all major theological points Baptists were very close indeed to the Presbyterians of the *Westminster Confession* (1646) and the Congregationalists of the *Savoy Declaration* (1658). There

were of course differences – such as on baptism and church government. But ‘Particular’ Baptists were so called because of their commitment to ‘particular’ redemption (the Reformed doctrine that Christ’s death is saving in its effect for the elect only). Their successors today believe that the claim to the name ‘Reformed’ is not a false one.

But – what does it mean in practice today?

Key words for understanding Reformed Christians are radical and consistent.

1. We are radical because we trace biblical truths to their depths. We are not content with superficial definitions. ‘God’ must be explored for all he is worth. He is not an object of scientific study, but in his Word he has given us so much information about himself that not to analyse it and synthesise it as rigorously as possible would be an affront to his condescension and kindness. In what follows I shall indicate other areas where the Reformed Christian is radical. We want to get to the depths of ourselves, the depths of the way of salvation and the heart of what it means to be a Christian.

In practice we want to live our faith. Reformed Christians have therefore been at the forefront of battles for liberty of conscience and have not infrequently been a revolutionary force in the Church and the world. Any idea of ‘Reformed’ that sees it as a synonym for staid, boring and predictable is a travesty.

2. We are consistent in that we work the truths of Scripture through to their logical conclusions as far as possible. In this sense we are heirs of Calvin who was one of the most penetrating and systematic theologians of all time. We believe the Bible is the revealed Word of God and therefore has an internal consistency which does not have to be forced but is to be discovered. However, if there are two apparently opposing or apparently contradictory truths revealed in Scripture – the most obvious ones being the sovereignty of God and the free will and responsibility of man – we leave them to stand together and do not force them into a false harmony. In this we are like Calvin himself who was always insistent on allowing Scripture to have the last word even if he could not make logical sense of it. In this, too, we are unlike some other traditions, such as hyper-Calvinism and Arminianism, which make the mistake of putting logic above Scripture.

Let us now look at some Reformed distinctives. It can be seen that while we share the ‘big issues’ with other Evangelicals, our radicalism and consistency

contribute to making Reformed Christianity the clearest and strongest formulation of Christianity that the Church has yet attained.

1. Scripture

Conviction of its authority is shared with others but we have a further emphasis on its:

a. *necessity*. We are in darkness without God's Word to us. 'By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God...' (Heb 11:3). Reformed Christians begin with a conviction of human spiritual blindness. This is a consequence of our greater insistence on total depravity.

b. *sufficiency*. We need nothing other than Scripture. This provides a bastion against the temptation of mixing Scripture with philosophy such as Roman Catholic 'tradition' or modern claims to 'prophecy today'.

c. *internal consistency*. As stated above, Reformed Christians have been foremost in systematising Scripture. We develop doctrines and from them Confessions. The great Confessions of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are of course Reformed. These provide great strength for Christian-living derived from doctrine.

i. Presupposed is the unity of Scripture as God's Word. 'Men spoke from God' (2 Peter 1:21) and acted freely in so doing, but God superintended their thinking and speaking so that what he wanted written they wrote. Can we grasp this 'dual working' with our minds? No, but we believe it and it is entirely rational. As a result the Bible is a unity, the work of one Mind.

ii. Presupposed too is the importance of the human mind as a receiver of revelation and the way reason can grasp revelation. God spoke and the universe came into being. He made man and woman in his image to respond to him, to glorify him and to enjoy him for ever. Integral to this is the human mind. By it we receive God's Word, we speak back to him (in prayer) and we speak God's Word to others.

iii. The importance of the mind in living the Christian life cannot be over-emphasised - truth comes to us through the mind in conversion and as we love and understand the Word of God so we will grow as Christians.

iv. But Calvinists insist that the mind must always be subordinate to the Word and when we cannot understand we must not distort or ignore Scripture to fit our systems.

v. Typical of the Calvinist sense of the unity of Scripture is the development of the theology of covenant as the unifying structure of Scripture, and of God's self-revelation in the twin doctrines of Law and Gospel. Law and Gospel comprise a conversation throughout Scripture between God's demand and his provision, between his righteousness and his grace.

vi. Covenant, Law and Gospel, as all else in Scripture, are fulfilled and culminate in Christ.

d. *dependence*. We depend on the witness of the Spirit in the reception of truth. He confirms our faith in Scripture as God's Word.

2. The supremacy of God in all things

The Reformed Christian is 'God-entranced'. We see the glory of God as the goal of all of life and eternity and God's purpose in all his work. It is of immense and ultimate comfort to the believer that God is sovereign in creation and providence (Gen 50:19,20; Isa 46:9-11) and in salvation (Acts 2:23, 4:28; John 6:37, Jonah 2:9; Eph 1:3-11).

3. The utter dependence of man in all things

We are utterly dependent though not merely passive or inactive. Although we have a deep conviction of man as totally depraved and work this out more consistently than other evangelical traditions, we do not have a low view of man as created. He is glorious, created as the summit of creation and his glory makes his fall only the more tragic and culpable.

In creation, God made us; in providence, he governs us; in salvation, he saves us. He made us alive in Christ when we were spiritually dead.

A combination of these views of God and man leads to the 'Five Points' of Calvinism which are not by any means all there is to Reformed Christianity, but Reformed Christianity is certainly not less than the five points: *Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace* and

Perseverance of the Saints.

The same combination of views gives us a profound dependence on the Holy Spirit in living the Christian life. Calvin was called the ‘theologian of the Holy Spirit’.

What is not so commonly understood about Reformed Christians is that they also hold

4. A high view of the Church

It is the body of Christ - Eph. 5:25-27. If we hold Christ as precious, the Church must be precious. We are drawn together by Christ. We regard our assembling together, too, as precious.

a. The marks of the Church are: preaching (Christ exercising his prophetic office among us); the sacraments (Christ exercising his priestly office) and discipline (Christ the King among us).

b. Our worship is to be governed by God’s Word. The ‘regulative’ principle is that only what is prescribed in God’s Word or clearly implied in it is acceptable in worship services. This liberating principle frees the church from human laws, for example the tyranny of Roman rites, or of human imagination such as in modern man-centred worship, or entertainment-style worship.

So Reformed worship will usually consist of: the Word of God read and preached (1 Tim 4:13; Acts 2:42; 2 Tim 4:2); prayer (1 Tim 2:1; Acts 2:43); praise (Eph 5:19; Col 3:16; Matt 26:30); the Lord’s Supper (1 Cor 11:23-26).

The regulative principle is biblically based on the necessity of revelation to enable us to approach God and the sufficiency of Scripture for approaching him. In particular we look at the Second Commandment with its emphasis on spiritual worship, and at Leviticus 10:1-3 where Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, were severely punished for offering to God not what had been forbidden but simply what had not been commanded. See also Deuteronomy 4:12-15; 23-24.

c. Worship is also to be rational, simple and Christ-centred.

d. The task of the Church in relation to the world is to obey the great commission – to go into the world and make disciples of all nations. It is in this way more than any other that we obey the ‘cultural mandate’ of Genesis 1. Historically Reformed Christians have been in the forefront of experiencing and praying for revival as the great means by which God advances his kingdom.

5. The Christian life

a. It begins with evangelical experience. The experience of Isaiah (6:1-3) though in itself unique also provides a great model for conversion – conviction of sin, cleansing by the sacrifice of Christ and glad response to his call to serve him.

b. It is lived ‘before God’ - *coram Deo* - a motto of the Puritans. Reformed Christians will have a grateful and positive attitude to God’s law – seeing it not as an imposition or as something from which the gospel and the Spirit release us, but as the form of life which we are now to live - ‘O how I love your law’ – Ps 119:97. We have been delivered from the bondage of law-breaking to enjoy the freedom of law-keeping. That includes the Fourth Commandment.

c. It embraces all of life: home, politics, work, studies, culture, arts, sciences. The ‘cultural mandate’ (Gen 1:28) still applies to man. This means witnessing, in word and life, to Christ’s Lordship over all things. Reformed Christianity engages with all creation.

i. The Renaissance and Reformation of the sixteenth century opened up scientific discovery and Calvinism in particular made the gospel a real force in the world. In *For the Glory of God*, American historian Rodney Stark argues that though one cannot say that the rise of modern science in the seventeenth century was a particularly Protestant movement, it is indisputable that it emerged in western Europe and nowhere else at that time. It can be persuasively argued that a faith that presented God as rational, responsive, dependable and omnipotent and the universe as his personal creation provides a solid basis. A rational and stable structure is in place awaiting human comprehension. It is this framework that makes science possible. See A N Whitehead, *Science and the modern world* (1925). The emphasis is again on reason ‘thinking God’s thoughts after him’. In no way has Christianity been an enemy of science. Calvin wrote, for example, ‘...There is need of art and of more exacting toil in

order to investigate the motion of the stars, to determine their assigned stations, to measure their intervals, to note their properties' (I.5.2) and again, 'If we regard the Spirit of God as the sole fountain of truth, we shall neither reject the truth itself nor despise it wherever it appear...' (II.2.15).

God's laws undergird everything. They give consistency, order, reliability, predictability. Nietzsche gave a back-handed compliment to Christianity when he said, 'I fear we have not yet thrown off belief in God for we still trust grammar.'

ii. The Calvinist principle of 'vocation' gives honour to every human enterprise however humble because God called you to it and you do it for his glory. 'Vocation' is not a preserve of the clergy.

Christians are being renewed in the image of God and should be foremost in subduing creation to the rule of Christ. We do so as we live obediently to his will in our calling.

iii. The Christian life centres on seeking after God and communion with him, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. John Owen's books *Communion with God* and *The Glory of Christ* reflect the dynamic of the spiritual life. Again, we are wholly dependent on the Spirit in this.

iv. There is a proper perspective on life - our 'short and uncertain pilgrimage' to the 'city that has foundations' yet we are to seek 'the welfare of the city' on earth to which God has called us.

v. We are longing for Christ's return and believe in revival. Whatever our framework for the last things (and Reformed Christians would differ: most would be 'amillennialist' or 'postmillennialist' and have confidence in the flourishing of the gospel in this age, even if we do not all hold to the optimistic views of many of the Puritans or Jonathan Edwards) we look to Christ's return for the ultimate demonstration of his glory, our own glorification with him, and the completion of his work of redemption.

vi. The Reformed Christian is always reforming. 'Perfecting holiness out of fear of the Lord'; pursuing that 'holiness without which no-one will see the Lord' (2 Cor 7:1; Heb. 12:14).

John Eliot – apostle to the Indians

Hugh Collier

IT IS THE 28TH OCTOBER 1646. FOR THE FIRST TIME 42-YEAR OLD JOHN ELIOT IS PREACHING THE GOSPEL IN ALGONQUIN, the American Indians' own language. They listen intently as he preaches for an hour and a quarter. He speaks to them of the one true God who made the heavens and the earth; he tells them of the fall of man and the seriousness of sin. He gives them the whole Bible story. He speaks to them of the joys of heaven and the terrors of hell. He then tells them of the Saviour whom God has sent and what he has done and the command to repent and believe in him. They have listened with great seriousness - they have never heard anything like it before. When John Eliot finishes preaching, he asks them if they understood what he has said. They reply in chorus with a 'Yes'. Then follow nearly another two hours of questions from them, all carefully and simply answered.

John Eliot was born in 1604, the third of seven children in Widford, Hertfordshire to godly parents Bennett and Lettese or Lettye Eliot. Aged 14 John who excelled in languages was enrolled in Jesus College, Cambridge for a four-year Bachelor of Arts degree. Both his parents died whilst he was at college. We have no record of his ordination to the Christian ministry or what ministry he undertook in England before leaving these shores.



This portrait of John Eliot is taken from the frontispiece to the modern history of Roxbury Latin School (by kind permission of the Headmaster).

He taught in the school of Thomas Hooker at Little Baddow, Essex, and lived with the Hooker family during that time. Thomas Hooker was a powerful Puritan preacher and was rector of Little Baddow. This was not an insignificant time for Eliot because, whatever the influence of Christianity upon him up until this point, it was to this time that Eliot attributes his conversion. He later wrote about his time at Little Baddow, 'To this place was I called through the infinite riches of God's mercy in Jesus Christ to my poor soul, for here the Lord said to my dead soul, Live! Live! And through the grace of God I do live and shall

live forever! When I came to this blessed family I then saw as never before the power of godliness in its lovely/lively vigour and efficacy.' Thomas Hooker, his character, home life and teaching, clearly had a huge influence on Eliot during the short time they were together. The school closed in 1630 when Hooker had to flee to Holland, but by this time Hooker's Puritan ideals, his experimental religion and spiritual vigour had been embraced by Eliot, and his own time in England was soon to come to an end.

And so in the late summer of 1631 Eliot boarded the *Lyon* as it set sail for the New England colony, then only 18 months old. Eliot left knowing that members of his family were planning to follow him shortly. There was also a young lady who was going to follow him shortly too, Hanna Mumford. He was engaged to be married to this lady and she had promised to join him the following year.

After a ten-week voyage, the *Lyon* arrived at Boston on November 2nd. The entire settlement came out to greet the 60 passengers that were aboard. This included the wife and children of the governor of New England, John Winthrop. In his journal John Winthrop mentions amongst the passengers who arrived 'Mr John Eliot, a minister'. John Eliot was then 27 years old.

Eliot was called to be the pastor of a small church at a village called Roxbury. The first marriage registered in the church was that of John Eliot and Hanna Mumford in October 1632. It was a marriage that was to last 55 years. Very little is known about Hanna, but it is clear that she was God's gift to support Eliot in his work. What he undertook would never have been possible without her help.

For the first 10-12 years of his time in New England Eliot devoted his time to pastoral work. In order to show people their need of Christ he preached the law with great passion. Cotton Mather says that 'he would sound the trumpet of God against all vice with a most penetrating liveliness, and make his pulpit another Mount Sinai.' There was also something in his sermons beyond the work of mere man; an unction in his preaching that could only be attributed to the power of the Holy Spirit.

His preaching was backed up by a life of prayer. He would frequently set apart whole days for special prayer and communion with God, often with fasting. The people of Roxbury loved their pastor, and when at last he became too frail to preach he said that he should not take his salary any more, but his people refused to hear of it, and whilst appointing another pastor continued to provide a salary for Eliot as well.

Eliot was in his pulpit at Roxbury virtually every Sunday, prepared and ready to preach, even though during the week he had travelled many miles on horseback

to visit and preach to the Indians and help them in various ways, having learnt their language and given them a Bible in that language. Not only that, his ministry towards his own people also included being heavily involved in the establishing of the first school in Roxbury. His older brother Philip was the first schoolmaster. John Eliot was passionate about education, and when he was involved in establishing Indian towns, one of the first things to be set in place was a school for the children to learn to read and write. He was also involved in the first book to be printed in New England published in 1640, *The Bay Psalm Book*. This was a new version of the metrical Psalms.

What led Eliot to take on this great work of taking the gospel to the Indians, with all the difficulties and barriers that it involved? He was by this time 40 years old. Many years later he was asked that question. His reply was twofold; firstly it was because of the colony seal and secondly due to his own 'pity for the poor Indian'. By the 'colony seal' he was referring to the seal of the governor and colony of Massachusetts Bay in New England which featured on it the picture of a native Indian saying the words, 'Come over and help us.' This was expressing the fact that the reason for coming across the water was not simply to be free to practise religion according to their own conscience but also for the spread of the gospel among those who had not heard it.

It will be useful to know a little about what these Indians were like and what they believed. They had a yellowish, dark complexion, and long, black, straight hair, the men's shaved off at the sides. They were not a nomadic people as such, but they were mobile. They would plant crops, move around to hunt and fish and gather, and then come back to their crops. They were apparently a lazy people, especially the men, who apart from growing tobacco left most things to the women. They were governed by chiefs or shechems. In terms of religion they would worship the sun, moon, earth, fire and other things. They believed that most things had spirits in them, including hills, trees and rivers. They had priests who were called powwows or shamans, whom they feared greatly. They believed that these shamans had the ability to cast spells, predict the future, and communicate with the spirit world. They would be called on to perform incantations over them when they were sick or dying. Their superstitions made them a fearful and sad people.

John Eliot knew that to take the gospel to the Indians he must learn their language. There were no textbooks to read. In fact, there was no written language. So Eliot found an Indian who spoke English fluently and took him into his family home. Slowly he learned their words and began to understand how their language worked, and to put it into a written form. It was a painstaking work. Years later when he produced his *Indian Grammar* he wrote, 'We must not sit still, and look for miracles; up and be doing, and the Lord will be with thee. Prayer and

pains, through faith in Christ Jesus, will do anything.' Eliot was endowed with remarkable persistence. Linguists since the time of Eliot have marvelled at his work and at the way he went about understanding the language and working out its rules and grammar. It was a major contribution to the science of languages. So it was that at the age of 42, fifteen years after arriving in Boston, the moment came for John Eliot to preach his first sermon in Algonquin.

Of all the questions asked in the meetings there was one that pained Eliot the most. 'Why has no white man ever told us this before?' His answer was simply, 'I am sorry.'

Every week for the next 40 or so years Eliot would mount his horse and ride many miles through all weathers to preach the gospel and teach the new believers. Over those years large numbers of Indians came to true faith in Jesus Christ.

The Indians desired to establish towns of their own. From that first meeting their request had been for land of their own, and Eliot took up their cause. By the time King Philip's war came in 1675, fourteen Indian towns, or as they became known, 'praying towns', had been established, virtually all with Eliot's personal involvement and oversight.

In 1663 the whole Bible was printed in the Algonquin language, and all the work had been done by Eliot himself with an Indian helper. This was the first Bible to be printed in America. The Indians were thrilled to have the Bible in their own language, and it encouraged many more Indians to learn to read. Eliot translated other books apart from the Bible, including catechisms and Baxter's *Call to the Unconverted*.

Once converted the Indians were soon asking about having a church of their own, in their own language. It was 14 years from the time that Eliot had first preached to them to the establishing of the first Indian church in 1660. The delay was largely due to the suspicions of the English ministers towards the Indians. When they had first asked about a church of their own, Eliot had encouraged them first to settle in one place and establish themselves. This they did with their own town of Natick. When they had done this, all those wanting membership had to give public testimony to their conversion and knowledge of God.

Finally in 1660, 14 years after that first sermon, the church at Natick was formed. It was regarded as one of the New England churches.

I have not described the battles and opposition he experienced from the settlers and even from church members who feared the Indians. There was much more support for his cause in England. The work was decimated in a terrible manner

when war broke out between the settlers and the Indian communities. That war was over land rights. Readers can gain a fuller picture of the struggles involved in my 17-page biography published in the Westminster Conference papers for 2011.

The end came for Eliot himself at the age of 86. The date was the 20th May 1690. He died full of faith and anticipation; his last words were 'Welcome joy'. His funeral took place the next day; he was buried in Roxbury burial ground. The inscription on the grave reads, 'Here lie the remains of John Eliot, Apostle to the Indians.'

Ten years later in 1700 Cotton Mather wrote, 'Through the blessing of God in this one Massachusetts province, the Indians have mostly embraced the Christian religion. There are, I suppose, more than thirty congregations of Indians, and many more than three thousand Indians, in this one province, calling on God in Christ, and hearing His glorious Word.'

Lessons from the life of John Eliot

1. There is the challenge of such utter dedication to the work of Jesus Christ. In all that he did Eliot's one concern was the name and cause of Jesus Christ. John Eliot had no car, no computer, no phone, and yet with a vision for what could be done for these Indians, with sheer hard work and a refusal to give up he accomplished a staggering amount.

2. It is encouraging to think that he did not even start his work amongst the Indians until he was around 40 years old. Perhaps we should be open to what else the Lord might have for us to do. Does he have new avenues of service planned for us? What might you do in retirement?

3. In Eliot we are also faced with the challenge of being concerned for the whole man. These Indians who listened to Eliot as he came to them time after time knew that he loved them, knew that he was ready to help them in every area of life

4. Let us also take encouragement from this reminder of the power of the gospel. When Eliot reached these Indians they were living in darkness. They knew nothing of the God of the Bible or the gospel, and yet many hundreds of them came to saving faith in Jesus Christ. Surely that is encouraging to us as we face the challenges of our dark days.

5. Eliot's example reminds us that there are thousands of unreached people groups. Is it possible for your church to adopt a UPG and make progress toward taking the gospel to that group? If you google Joshua Project you will see where the UPGs are located round the world and gain information as to how practical progress can be made.

A Seminary at Home

MY NICKNAME IS 'TYPICUS' WHICH STANDS FOR TYPICAL BECAUSE I AM TYPICAL OF THOUSANDS OF PASTORS around the world. I live in a remote area of Malawi. I pastor five churches of about thirty people each. I have a growing family so there is no way that I can leave home and study in a seminary either in Blantyre here in Malawi or where there is more choice in South Africa. In spite of these difficulties I have enjoyed a theological education. This has come about through the study of 31 books. The completion of this course has taken me two years in which I have been answerable to an examiner called a grader.

All the books have been provided to me free through a local church, which is a distributor for Chapel Library in Pensacola, Florida, USA. The 31 books are given three classifications: basic, intermediate and advanced.

First I refer to some of the basic books. These expound the essential salvation truths of the Bible such as repentance and faith and also prayer. Prayer is the first activity of a convert. Samuel M Zwemer said that 'prayer is the gymnasium of the soul'. It is also the life of the church. No prayer means no church. This course has two studies on prayer. The first is by J C Ryle combined with Lee Roy Shelton Jr. The second is David MacIntyre's *The Hidden Life of Prayer*.

I was surprised to find the book *The Story of the Puritans* by Erroll Hulse in the basic section, but having read it I now see why. We who are isolated need to be introduced to Church History and to biographies. These short biographies of Puritan pastors not only inform me but inspire me to be faithful.

Talking of the Puritans, a thrilling book in the basic section is *The Pilgrim's Progress*. This classic by John Bunyan never fails to edify and inspire.

I turn now to the intermediate section of these studies. I begin with *The Attributes of God* by A W Pink. How awesome are God's attributes! A W Pink is reverent and challenging. Next I read *The Doctrines of Grace in the Gospel of John* by R Bruce Steward. We are humbled when we remember that we are saved through no merit of our own. This is life-changing truth.

In this section there are two books covering Church History written by Stanford E Murrell. These have given me an overview of God's purpose and work through all the centuries. The first volume takes me up to the Reformation and the second from the Reformation to present times. The style of this author is refreshing. It is a pleasure to read these books. New Testament Survey is also an important part in the intermediate section.

Mortification of sin is essential for every believer. Included in the intermediate section is a study titled *Holiness* using the classic by J C Ryle. With AIDS rampant in Africa this is a most important practical subject.

In this section students are introduced to Confessional Christianity through a study of the 1689 Second London Confession of Faith. Every one of the 32 chapters in the Confession is followed by textual references and a series of questions. This Confession has opened my eyes to the fact that the Bible contains a coherent body of truth in which all the constituent parts inter-relate and strengthen each other. I have come to see that the future of the churches depends on doctrinal faithfulness. Unless we hold to truth in all its essential parts we will be vulnerable to heresies as is illustrated by Church History. I am determined to persuade the churches I lead to incorporate this Confession in their constitutions and require that the elders and deacons subscribe to this Confession. This will help safeguard the future and prevent the churches from being hijacked by savage wolves who exploit people to line their own pockets.

The third section of this course is titled 'advanced'. It includes Dreblow's book *Methods of Bible Study*, and *Biblical Eldership* by Alexander Strauch. To these are added two courses on *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit* by A W Pink. These have enabled me to appreciate the dimensions of the work of the Holy Spirit. Before this my thinking was shallow.

For reasons of space I have not referred to all 31 books in this home seminary course.

A fifty-page handbook describing all the books in the course forms part of the course so the student can track his own progress. Heart-warming comments from students abound all the way through the handbook. These personal paragraphs provide a sense of fellowship and remind me that our Lord is extending his kingdom throughout the world.

These studies assist me in preparation of sermons. The strong emphasis on repentance and faith creates in me the determination to proclaim the good news of salvation by grace. The doctrines of grace and the clarity in the courses on the sovereignty of God steer me away from the crippling man-centred prosperity gospel which is doing terrible damage in Africa.

Following this course means that I belong to what must be the largest seminary in the world. The small church of Mount Zion with its Chapel Library publishing ministry supplies this course and the 31 books to about 30,000 students like me. It is wonderful to know that the course I have described is also working in 4,000 prisons in North America. [Visit www.chapellibrary.org for more info.]

Israel

Official opening of church building

THE GROWTH OF THE CHURCH IN ISRAEL SINCE the rebirth of the country in 1948 has been remarkable. When the modern state of Israel came into being there were, significantly, just twelve Jewish believers in the land. Twenty years later, in 1968 the number of Israeli Jews who believed in Jesus was less than fifty. In 1988 they numbered fewer than 500 but today no one knows how many Jewish Israeli followers of Jesus there are. The lowest estimate is 10,000 but, according to others, there could be twice that number. The fact is that the Church in Israel has grown at a phenomenal rate over the last 25 years.

One of the first fellowships to come into being was the *Grace and Truth* congregation. It was also the first to declare its commitment to the historic Reformed Confessions of Faith. On Saturday 6 April the congregation's building was officially opened. Almost 300 people, most of them members of the congregation, gathered to give thanks to God for his faithfulness.

The vision for the building was conceived in the 1990s. The purchase of a piece of land was made with great difficulty. The ground-breaking

ceremony took place in November 2000. The building project came to a halt when funding dried up. Some members of the congregation came to regard the building as an albatross around their necks. David Zadok, one of the congregation's elders, retained the vision. Two years ago, with the help of the Isaac da Costa Foundation in Holland, work began again and the building is now occupied as you can see from the photo on the front inside cover. More work needs to be done.

David Zadok, who is also the Israel Field Leader of the UK-based mission Christian Witness to Israel, came to faith in Jesus while in the USA and returned to Israel in 1983. He joined *Grace and Truth* because of its commitment to Reformed theology. He was ordained an elder in 1990 but returned to the States some ten years later to study at Westminster Theological Seminary. David was installed as the church's pastor in January. In his address to the congregation he reminded them of God's covenant faithfulness to the Jewish people and the importance of 'land' and 'place' in the Old Testament. God provided a place for Adam and Eve to live, he promised Noah he would not again destroy the earth with a flood, and he promised a land in perpetuity to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and their descendants. The land provided, among other things, safety and security but it was also the

place from which God's law would go forth to all nations. Even in the New Testament Jesus promised to prepare a 'place' for his people.

With the opening of the building Pastor Zadok declared that God had provided a place in the land for his people which they must use for his glory and from which they must reach out with the gospel to their neighbours.

Reflecting on the recent history of the Jewish people, Pastor Zadok reminded those gathered that God had brought his covenant people back to the land promised to their fathers and had restored Hebrew as the common language in Israel. The Jewish people in the land have come from all nations and languages to their ancient homeland where the tongue of the prophets is the common language.

Situated in the southern part of Gush Dan, the building is architecturally Middle Eastern in appearance. It was designed to resemble both a church and a synagogue. Inside, light streams in from all sides and from the huge domed skylight, symbolising the light of Messiah.

Since work began on the building, a major new road junction has made access to the venue from the north and south, the east and west easy and quick, and a second major junction is currently under construction. This puts the magnificently designed building in a strategic position to serve not only as a house of prayer and worship but also as a conference centre and a cultural venue.

Outstanding loans remain to be repaid. The congregation, though increasing, is challenged financially.

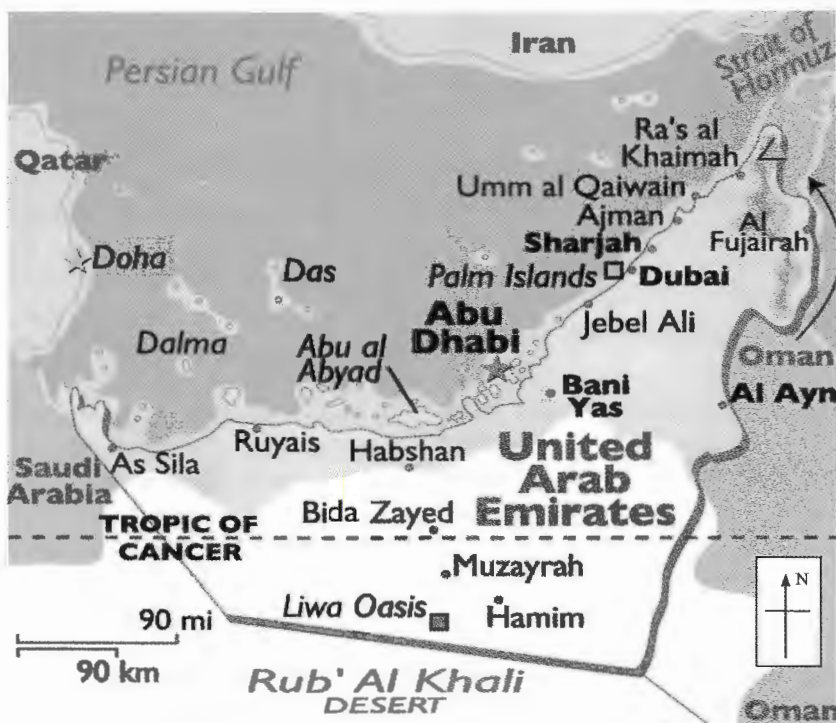
United Arab Emirates - Dubai

My trip to Dubai was a fantastic opportunity to find out about the strategic ministry of UCCD (United Christian Church of Dubai). Fourteen years ago the rulers of Dubai granted UCCD a plot of land outside the city in the desert. Since then new development in the 'gap' has joined the church plot to the city. A large multi-purpose building was completed, and now eleven churches regularly meet in the Dubai Evangelical Church Centre, the largest of which is UCCD, the English-speaking International Church. Seven years ago UCCD invited Pastor John Folmer, formerly serving with Mark Dever at Capitol Hill Baptist Church Washington, to be senior pastor.

Now UCCD, representing 50-plus nationalities, has a multi-ethnic staff team, and is promoting a distinctively biblical and Reformed ministry throughout Dubai, and the Emirates, and beyond. They get numerous opportunities to share the gospel with people from all over the world.

www.uccdubai.com/

They have planted churches most recently in neighbouring Emirate, Ra's Al Khaimah (RAK). The Sheikh of RAK granted UCCD land for an evangelical church building in the main city of his Emirate. This is a



wonderful opportunity. Two couples have been set aside to lead this work, and services commenced in March, meeting in a Convention Centre, until a church building is constructed. If the funds can be raised, the site will be used for a multi-purpose building for various ministries, training, mission, and conference ministries as well as the local church there.

<http://www.uccdubai.com/rakchurchplant>

I was privileged to lead a retreat for the women of these two churches, who came from a huge variety of nations and situations. I gave three sessions, focussing on the themes of love for Christ, revival, mission and

holiness – using the lives of three women in church history. It was a joy to be with such godly women, and I enjoyed speaking there more than I've ever enjoyed any other speaking engagements. Just being in such a strategic situation, knowing that women were there who might be going back to very difficult home situations whether in Dubai or elsewhere in the world made it so real that these women would have to find resources in Christ – alone. *S James*

France - Paris

An encouraging week of outreach was recently organised by 'La Voix des Prophètes' (Voice of the Prophets) in Paris:

110 young people (age 15-25) formed the team. 150 were present at each of the evening training sessions. More than 500 significant conversations took place. Over 900 Bibles were distributed as well as 500 copies of the booklet 'Cher Abdullah' and the CD 'Chemin vers le ciel' (testimonies of Christians from Muslim backgrounds) were given away.

Final evangelistic evening

We were very encouraged by the final evening meeting. Over 180 people were present, many of whom came from places that are closed to the gospel. Many Arabs, Berbers and French people came. There was a simultaneous translation into Arabic provided by an Egyptian brother.

The room was so packed that we had to discreetly urge Christians present to leave in order to make space for the numerous Muslims who had come! We therefore ended up with four other rooms full of Christians praying for the salvation of those listening in the main room. There was an improvised crèche for young children.

At least 70 non-Christians responded to our invitation to the evening meeting entitled 'The Prophet Moses and the Bronze Snake'. The vast majority of them were from a Muslim background. The audience included one Imam and three veiled women, one with just her eyes visible. The team could hardly believe what they were seeing! The lady wearing a full burka had a long conversation with

one of the girls on the team. I was then called over to speak to her. She said, 'I was very moved by the message. It is so beautiful that I can hardly believe it can be true.' I encouraged her to pray and ask God to help her. She promised to do so that very evening.

There were many amazing conversations. We stayed talking with the visitors until midnight.

S, from Mali, gave his life to the Lord during the week and came to the closing meeting. He confirmed his intention to join the church, and we watched with joy as we heard him sharing his new-found faith with another Malian. What an encouragement!

M, a Kabyle Algerian, was clearly very touched by the message. He had received an invitation the previous Sunday and waited impatiently for the Friday meeting. M spoke to many team members and prayed with one in particular. He took the church's details and asked if he could attend on Sunday. It seems he is not far from the kingdom. Pray for him.

Pray for a young North African, Y, and his 'Christian' Egyptian friends. They brought him along, but it was clear that they themselves need to get serious about living for the Lord!

Pray for the Imam who was there and for a veiled Moroccan Berber lady who was mourning two children and who said that she had heard the gospel for the first time. (Her neighbour is a Christian).

Pray for the local church who will be following up all these contacts.

Sri Lanka

My visit this time was spent mostly at Baldaeus Theological College near Trincomalee in the north-east of Sri Lanka. I had been invited by the acting principal, Huthin Manohar ('Mano'), a former LTS student, and spent the first week teaching Systematic Theology to about 25 students. They were almost all from the Tamil churches in the north and east. They were attentive, interested, intelligent and appreciative – all that students should be! There were some lively debates but no serious disagreements, though one or two came from Arminian backgrounds and struggled with the doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints. Surely, they argued from Hebrews 6:4-6, this is the picture of a Christian losing his salvation. I worked hard to persuade them otherwise.

The second week was short – only two days of teaching, but seven sessions in total, with about 30 pastors from Reformed churches in the north-east, as well as from a church in Colombo. They had asked me to teach on Richard Baxter's classic *The Reformed Pastor* (written in 1655) so five of the sessions were based on that. They found Baxter as challenging in 21st-century Sri Lanka as he was in seventeenth-century England. I also

did a session on 'shepherding' in Scripture – the Lord as our Shepherd and what that means for pastors. Also at their request, I gave a paper on worship – what it is, worship in the New Testament, and the 'regulative' principle (that we should only do in worship what Scripture authorises). Again there were some lively discussions and I believe the subject was useful for them to think about, even in outline.

On the first Sunday I enjoyed the fellowship of Grace Evangelical Church in Colombo. This has three congregations (Tamil, Sinhalese and English). On the first Sunday of the month they gather for a joint service. I preached and took a Bible study afterwards. On my second Sunday I travelled with Mano to his home church in Mannar, north-west Sri Lanka. Again I preached and led a Bible study. These are warm fellowships, both quite large – about 100 people in the services.

I had a lovely day in Colombo to finish off, relaxing in the home of Suresh, the pastor of Grace Church. He and his wife spent three years in South Wales where he studied at WEST.

It was a rich time and, I pray, will prove to have been worthwhile.

Mostyn Roberts

Indonesia



Books gladly received at Aarobona College

Stephen Nowak

THIS WAS MY SIXTH TRIP TO INDONESIA AND IT WAS GOOD TO BE UNITED AGAIN WITH FRIENDS I HAVE KNOWN SINCE my first visit in 2008. With a population of about 232 million Indonesia is a massive country. 196 million are Muslim which is the largest number for any country. 36 million register as Christian. Of these a rough estimate is that 13 million are evangelical. The purpose of my ministry is to encourage Bible College students and help equip poor pastors in rural areas. The men I work with are involved in this work permanently.

Prior to travel much work is expended in procuring large quantities of reformed books in Indonesian at generous discounts in order to give these books to pastors and students who can ill afford to buy them. Momentum Publishing Company is my principal supplier. This company has achieved excellent work in translating and abridging Puritan classics and reformed writings by authors such as J C Ryle, A W Pink and John Piper.

The first commitment in my itinerary was in the environs of Jakarta at Aarabona Bible College with 38 students. I expounded Galatians with its emphasis on justification by faith alone. Each student received the 1689 Baptist Confession and eight books. I was also able to give a large box of books to the college library.

My second commitment was also in the area of Jakarta this time to 42 students at Paulus Theological College. For teaching I concentrated on Christology as outlined in Chapter 8 of the 1689 Baptist Confession. The times of prayer and worship before and after the sessions were full of spiritual refreshing from the presence of the Lord. Question time provided an opportunity to answer questions arising from difficult passages of Scripture. A copy of the 1689 and ten books were given to each student.

My third commitment was in Sumatra where I visited groups of pastors. This involved many hours of travel by boat and car. The roads are difficult and sign posts don't seem to exist so I was grateful for a professional driver who drove me to four locations. In all about 80 pastors came to the four meetings. These pastors live very simply. They have little training. I concentrated on teaching Pastoral Theology. The question times were helpful. Each pastor was given eight books.

My fourth commitment was in Kalimantan to work in a similar way as in Sumatra. All the boxes of books had arrived safely. I visited three churches and in all ministered to 100 pastors, each of whom received ten books. On average congregations consist of about 40 adults and 40 children. Often during the rainy season they are isolated for months. I travelled by motorbike for about two hours through the jungle to get to one of the villages called Ronai. I was informed that I was the first European these people had seen. There is a desperate shortage of expository books. The books were received with joy.

It is estimated that there may be as many as 350 thousand congregations in Indonesia. Many have no pastor. Many pastors have minimal training. If you would like any further information please contact *Pastor Stephen Nowak* – stephennowak@btinternet.com

African Pastors' Conferences

June 2013 Update

Meeting the needs of the hour in Africa

THE NEEDS ARE PALPABLY OBVIOUS. THERE IS A CLASH OF CULTURES AND A CLASS OF KINGDOMS IN THE MASSIVE areas of population in southern Africa – it is the historic clash of the kingdoms of this world and the Kingdom of Christ and it is being played out on our doorstep...and yours!

Only the gospel can bring change. The gospel has to be preached and that requires preachers, not just in 1st-century Rome, the Babylon of the day (Rom 10: 14-16; 1 Peter 5:13) but in the Babylon of our day.

The townships of southern Africa are full of self-styled churches which are not churches at all and led by unbelieving self-styled pastors. But there are many churches pastored by biblically-illiterate pastors who are true believers and need training and on-going support to pastor faithfully. They believe the Bible – they do not challenge inerrancy. They simply don't know how to expound it. The need for APCs is undeniable with supportive books and wise speakers addressing central issues. We thank God for what has been achieved thus far and as we look to the future we see great challenges, the need for growth and new strategies to reach those men who will really benefit.

At the time of writing in mid-June we are in the middle of a long run of conferences in Malawi and ending in Harare. There were many afflictions in reaching the conference venues as Mike Marsland, Tim Phillips and Newton Chilingulo travelled across several borders on the long journey north before their rendez-vous with Lichawa Thole the Zambian speaker. But the conferences so far in Lilongwe (51 delegates), Mzimba (34) and Blantyre (48 by lunchtime on day 1) have been much blessed and highly appreciated by the pastors. Following Blantyre will be Monkey Bay (a village on the shore of Lake Malawi) and finally Harare in Zimbabwe where between 100 and 200 are expected.

Mike Marsland has worked tirelessly for APC since the beginning of 2012, but had always said he would help us for a limited period before returning to the

Pastoral Ministry. We are grateful for all that the Lord has done through him as the first APC Manager. His successor will be a young man, Blake Cassell, who has studied under Sam Waldron, done some lecturing and is a member at Heritage BC in Owensboro, Kentucky. He is marrying Niki in August and hopes to get visas and necessary papers to come to South Africa in November. We interviewed him both in South Africa and in London and he, Niki and all who have met him are convinced that we are following the Lord's will in appointing him. He has many of the necessary skills for a difficult job, and has already spent some months in Kenya – so he understands the challenges of African culture and appreciates the idiosyncrasies of African bureaucracy. Please pray that the Lord our Provider will give us the necessary resources – and for Blake and Niki as they prepare for the Lord's work here.

This update needs to be set with background reality that we are providing for 34 annual conferences with an ever-increasing demand for books to which we are now adding many copies of the ESV Global Study Bible which is a library all on its own. This came about through a generous gift. We continue to be grateful for the donations which have come from churches and individuals and which have made this work possible. To this must be added an enormous contribution in terms of labour by volunteer workers. We also place on record our gratitude to Mrs Rachel Rothwell who has had to retire for health reasons. Pastor Phil Roberts has joined the team and has taken on the role of treasurer. Donations can be gift aided and should be posted to Pastor Phil Roberts, 121 Hartshill Road, Hartshill, Stoke on Trent, ST4 7LU.

E mail Phil@tentmaker.org.uk

Irving Steggles.

New article 1

IN AN EXCELLENT 17-PAGE STUDY PASTOR DANIEL Grimwade argues that the biblical 'Shepherd' motif continues to be a relevant model for pastoral ministry, even in the largely urban context of the 21st century, and rather than abandoning the metaphor, new life should be breathed into it.

When Lynn Anderson was asked why he kept referring to elders as 'shepherds', he explained: 'I can't find any figure equivalent to the shepherd idea in our modern, urban world. Besides, if I drop the shepherd and flock idea, I would have to tear about five hundred pages out of my Bible, plus leave the modern church with a distorted – if not neutered – view of spiritual leadership.'

New article 2

Highly commended is a 19-page biography of John Sutcliff written by Roger March, pastor of Wolverton Evangelical Church. Included within this enjoyable article is the background to the call to prayer. Here is a quote:

At the next Association meeting, held in Nottingham in June 1784, Sutcliff proposed that there should be a monthly prayer meeting for revival. It was to be held 'in concert' in each church on the first Monday of each month and be of one hour's duration. This proposal was adopted

and notification sent out with the annual letter for that year. Three things underpin this call to prayer, notes Michael Haykin:

1. The downward spiritual trend of their churches could not be reversed by mere human endeavour. There must be an outpouring of the Spirit of God.
2. They were to be concerned to encourage other church groupings to join them in praying for revival.
3. There was the need to evangelise their own communities.

It is not difficult to draw a connecting line between this communication [the call to prayer] and the sending forth of William Carey nine years later. FA Cox wrote in 1853 : 'The primary cause of missionary excitement in Carey's mind, and its diffusion among the Northamptonshire ministers was the meeting of the Association in 1784. Its simplicity and appropriateness have since recommended it to universal adoption; and copious showers of blessing from on high have been poured out upon the churches.' God did answer the prayers of his struggling people and we should surely find some encouragement to engage in prayer for a similar reversal in our own time of serious decline.

This material on John Sutcliffe is interlaced with photos and

illustrations. In this respect it is the best ever since RT began!

New article 3

Creation

On April 18th of this year Professor Andy McIntosh (Leeds) debated the theme 'Mind and Intelligence – Can evolution explain rationality and original thought?' against Dr. Glenn Geher, evolutionary psychologist of State University of New York. The debate was attended by over 200 - Dr. Geher made a defence of mind and intelligence being a result of evolutionary process, and majored on the experiments done on animals and on people. He argued that social behaviour is explained by evolutionary psychology with the words, 'Evolution is nothing more than a statistical bias in the rate of perpetuation of alternatives. It is a change in allele (gene expression) frequencies from one generation to the next'. Though Dr. Geher never clearly said he was a materialist, it was evident there was very little room for man being an agent primarily responsible for his actions. Firstly Professor McIntosh pressed the issue that it was not possible for the machinery of mind (DNA / brain / neurons) to arise naturally. He argued from the perspective of the theory of thermodynamics and information systems. Secondly that rationality has no meaning if we are simply a product of physics and chemical forces alone. And thirdly Professor McIntosh pressed home that morality has no fundamental basis in evolution. There is no absolute to work from. An atheist / materialist has no coherent answer

to Design, to Rationality, to Human Corruption, and supremely to Christ and his life / death / resurrection.

This was followed by a brief word of testimony at the end to the power of Christ to redeem and change lives. When a sceptic asked in the last question 'Who is this God?' the reply was that all the evidence showed (Rom 1:20) that there is a God who is (a) rational (b) transcendent to the physical universe we are in. The sceptic was asked to consider Christ who by His resurrection showed us God himself. The debate is available on line at <http://tinyurl.com/cpnvqzo> and there is a twelve-page transcript of the debate at the Reformation Today web site which includes a glossary of terms used. The interactions that evening whilst lively were respectful. In conversation afterwards to some enquiring sceptics Professor McIntosh was able to say furthermore (c) that we are made with a conscious mind able to 'know that we know' (epistemology) which shows that that the Mind that has made us is also personal and (d) lastly the evidence of conscience also shows that the God who has made us is morally good. A number of enquiring students were urged to read John's Gospel to find out for themselves.

Do have a look at the material on the website and see that the arguments for the truth of the Christian faith are very strong. No one can argue that science favours atheism. True science shows that there is a God who made us – none other than the Lord Jesus Christ who also died to save us from our sin.

Concert of Prayer - July 13th

THIS COMES TO GIVE YOU DETAILS OF THE NEXT ROUND OF UNITED GATHERINGS FOR PRAYER FOR THE OUTPOURING of God's Spirit. You will notice from the date in the heading that the meetings in Yorkshire have been moved on a week from the regular scheduled date. This is because two big events are taking place on July 6th, one in Otley and the other in Sheffield. Since they will attract a significant number of people from around the county, we thought that it would be unwise to clash with them.

The united prayer meetings are therefore planned for Saturday July 13th at the usual time of 10 am till 12 noon. Friends in other parts of the country will no doubt continue to meet as planned on the 6th. Even though our meetings are a week later, we still pray in fellowship. The venues for Yorkshire this time are as follows:

Northallerton: Northallerton Evangelical Church, 31 High Street, Northallerton, DL7 8EE.

Whitby: Whitby Evangelical Church, 12 Skinner Street, Whitby, YO21 3AJ.

Hull: Kingston Evangelical Church, Park Grove, Hull, HU5 2UR.

Bradford: Sunbridge Road Mission, Gaynor Street, Bradford, BD1 2LF.

Leeds: Tinshill Free Church, Holly Avenue, Leeds, LS16 6PL.

Mirfield: Mirfield Evangelical Church, Wellhouse Lane, Mirfield, WF14 0AN.

Sheffield: Wycliffe Independent Church, Hickmott Road, Sheffield, S11 8QF.

We have received encouraging reports of the meetings in Suffolk, Kent, and Lincolnshire, and it was good to hear of a meeting taking place on Teesside for the first time. No doubt meetings took place in other areas too, but we do not necessarily hear about them all. The meetings varied in size, but whether numbers were large or small the constant report has been of a sense of God's presence and leading, for which we are very grateful.

One thing we need to remember is that these meetings are not supposed to become an institutionalised part of our churches' permanent agendas. We long for the day when we don't need to pray for revival any more, because we are living in the glory of God's answers to our prayers. May such days soon come!

Jonathan Bayes

Erroll Hulse

drzhoubs@gmail.com

erroll.hulse@gmail.com

THE FINDER

THE FINDER IS A MOST USEFUL SOURCE OF REFERENCE TO LOCATE MATERIALS ON A WIDE VARIETY OF SUBJECTS that make up the vast wealth of Reformed literature. Writings by contemporary writers over the last fifty years are often at the cutting edge. Michael Keen of Wales had the foresight to recognise the need to be able to locate work done on theological and historical subjects. For instance with regard to biographical articles THE FINDER tells us that the Banner of Truth monthly magazine published a six-page cameo of John Eliot by Irfon Hughes in issue 496 (2004). Soon when I have completed updating THE FINDER there will be a reference to a 17-page biography of John Eliot by Hugh Collier published in the Westminster Conference papers of 2011.

Tentmakers have published hardback copies of THE FINDER. Soon you will be able to access THE FINDER on our RT website and be assisted with a new searchable database form, where you will be able to enter search criteria and search the database with the click of a button (it's available in its current form at www.reformation-today.org/finder). We also hope to make the searchable database available on CD Rom.

I remind you of what is available: The Banner of Truth Magazine Issue One (1955 to present); Reformation Today, Issue one (1970 to present); Puritan and Reformed Studies Conference (1955-69); The Westminster Conference (1971 to present), articles on the Banner of Truth website (1998 to present) and, new to THE FINDER an increasing number of *Reformation Today* Website articles (Dec 2011 to present).

Michael Charlton

At present, THE FINDER goes up to 2009. I am working to bring it up to date. And thanks again to Michael Keen for his work over many years.

Editor ERROLL HULSE, 75 Woodhill Road, Leeds LS16 7BZ
Associate Editors DAVID KINGDON, UK, TOM NETTLES, USA
JOHN CAMPBELL, Australia, MICHAEL HAYKIN, USA
Subscriptions General Enquiries: Frederick Hodgson, 170 Coach Road,
Sleights, Whitby, North Yorks., YO22 5EQ, UK
frederick.hodgson@gmail.com

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Bound volumes are available: 71-90, 91-110 and 111-130 are £22 (\$35) each, 131-148 is £25 (\$40), 149-172 is £40 (\$60), 173-190 and 191-208 are £25 (\$40) each and 209-226 is £35 (\$56)

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CONTENTS

1. Editorial
2. A Lost Eternity? Nigel Faithfull
6. Gay Marriage and the House of Lords Editor
10. What does 'Reformed' mean? Mostyn Roberts
17. John Eliot – apostle to the Indians Hugh Collier
22. A Seminary at Home Typicus
24. News
29. Indonesia Stephen Nowak
31. African Pastors' Conferences Irving Steggles
33. RT Website Michael Charlton
35. Concert of Prayer Jonathan Bayes
36. The Finder Michael Charlton