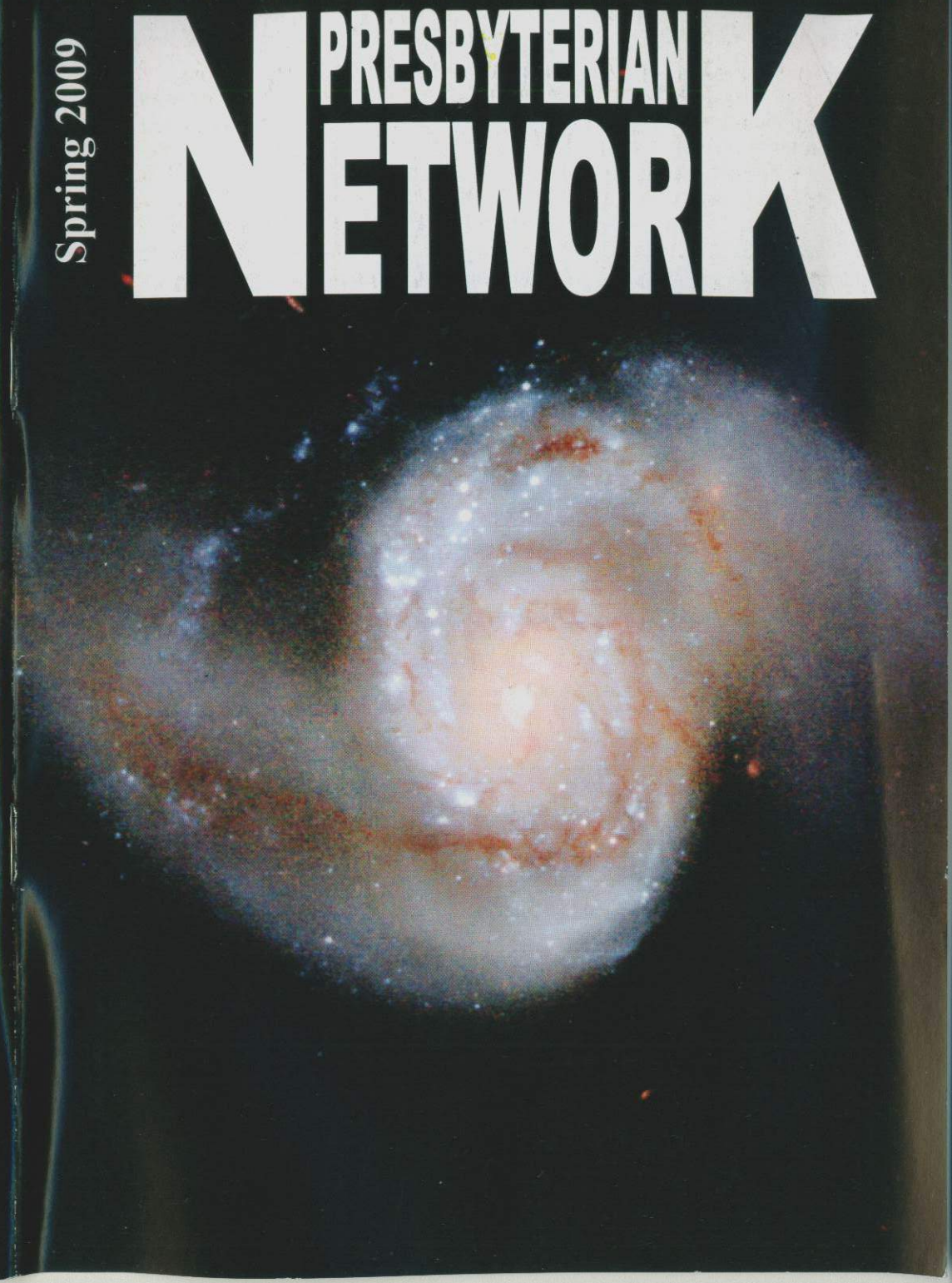
Spring 2009

PRESBYTERIAN NETWORK



On the Cover

Interacting galaxies 'Arp 87' [*Credit: NASA, ESA, and the Hubble Heritage Team (STScI/AURA)*] named after distinguished astrophysicist Dr Halton Arp (b.1927), staff astronomer at Mt Palomar and Mt Wilson observatories for 28 years, who catalogued hundreds of unusual galaxies in the 1960s. Because his findings challenged the basis of Big Bang dogma, he was threatened, barred from publishing, and finally denied all telescope time to pursue his work. In 2000, he declared, 'The most damaging aspect of science today is widely promulgated theories that are contradicted by observation and experiment. In both cases, a story is mandated by authority and then defended by educational, economic, and sociopolitical agencies.'

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PRESBYTERIAN NETWORK

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Two very different anniversaries!

This year there are two notable anniversaries, of Darwin and of Calvin. Charles Darwin was born 200 years ago (12 February 1809), John Calvin 500 years ago (10 July 1509). Their writings have shaped men's thinking. Darwin published *On the Origin of Species* in 1859 and Calvin the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* in 1559 (final Latin edition).

The world celebrates Darwin's 200th anniversary and how it has honoured him: buried in Westminster Abbey, his image is on the back of every English £10 note!

His leading idea is that species evolved over time by a process of natural selection, without design. David Attenborough says, 'Darwin's great insight revolutionized the way in which we see the world .... it has shown us that we are not set apart from the natural world, and do not have dominion over it' (BBC's *Charles Darwin and the Tree of Life,* February 2009). This contradicts God's Word just as the serpent did in Eden. Genesis 1: 26 reads, 'And God said "Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness, and let them have dominion ... over all the earth" '. Indeed, Charles Hodge wrote, 'We have thus arrived at the answer to our question, What is Darwinism? It is Atheism' (*What is Darwinism?* 1874).

Darwinism is poor science and bad theology. It spawns a 'creed' which questions or denies the fundamentals of the Bible: creation; the immortality of the soul; the moral law; the Judgment seat of Christ. It preaches, 'Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die!' The Bible says, It is appointed to man once to die and after that the judgment. Your undying spirit will one day be reunited to your resurrected body, and there is a future. Without a Saviour, without Jesus Christ, that future is a hopeless one: with Christ there is forgiveness, spiritual renewal, everlasting life.

After Darwinism has been continuously and aggressively promoted in schools and the media for decades, we now find that 'Half of Britons do not believe in Darwin's theory.... Only 25% think it is definitely true' (*The Week,* 701, p. 6). By this measure, Darwinists do not seem to be having much success convincing people.

In 2009, the church can thank God for the work of John Calvin—believer, minister of the Word in Geneva, reformer, prince of exegetes. Still today we can learn from his *Institutes,* his commentaries, sermons, and letters—and from his heart! Calvin's personal seal (above) depicted a heart held out in a hand, expressing his complete devotion to the Lord: 'J'offre mon coeur comme immolé, en sacrifice, au Seigneur' (*I offer my heart as sacrificed, in sacrifice, to the Lord*).

In this issue of the *Network,* you will see that Kevin McGrane has contributed a timely article on the relationship between science and the Christian faith. I draw attention to it: it will help our faith and our apologetic. —PJN

Looking to Jesus

Rev. Ian Hamilton
Cambridge Presbyterian Church

Sin is a corrupting, spoiling, God-dishonouring disease. It manifests itself in a defiance of God's Law, a rejection of God's Son, and a dismissal of God's church. Sin is multi-faceted. It betrays itself essentially by its self-oriented, earth-bound perspective on life. Its horizon is the stars, not the Creator of the stars. Its desire is the advancement of self, not the glory of God. Sin is congenitally *incurvatus in se*, that which turns us in upon ourselves.

This last statement is what I would like to reflect on here. The fundamental bias of our fallen nature is to make self and not God the ultimate referent in life. This seismic aberration lies at the heart of the troubles that afflict our world (indeed our cosmos!) and lies at the heart of many of the troubles that afflict many Christians. Let me explain.

We live in a deeply subjective world. Our culture has been seduced by the lie that we are masters of our own destiny. This rampant subjectivism has infected the evangelical church in its preoccupation to meet 'felt needs' rather than proclaim the objective gospel of God's grace in the Lord Jesus Christ. I do not mean for one moment that the gospel does not have subjective implications. It has momentous subjective implications: 'If any man is in Christ – new creation'! Nor do I mean that preachers should never address felt needs. Jesus did that in John 4 in his encounter with the woman at the well. What I mean is that the good news, which is the gospel, lies outside of ourselves and is wholly located in Christ. Paul can even tell the church in Colossae, 'Christ…is your life'. The righteousness we lack before God is found in Christ, who is 'the Lord our righteousness'. Because of this, Paul exhorts the Christians in Colossae to 'Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things'. The problem is that we often continue to set our minds inwardly and not outwardly. We look for encouragement within and not without.

This was a pastoral problem John Owen the great English Puritan divine recognized. He had preached on the text, 'This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as the propitiation for our sins' (1 Jn. 4: 10). Because he never ceased to think and feel as a pastor, Owen anticipated a query arising from his preaching: 'I cannot find my heart making returns of love unto God. Could I find my soul set upon him, I could then believe that his soul delighted in me.' To this Owen responds: 'This is the most *preposterous* course that possibly thy thoughts can pitch upon... "Herein is love", saith the Holy Ghost, "not that we loved God, but that he loved us" first, 1 John iv. 10,11. Now thou wouldst invert this order, and say, "herein is love, not that God loved me, but that I loved him first" ... This is a course of flesh's finding out that will never bring glory to God, nor peace to thy own soul. Lay down then, *thy reasonings*; take up the love of the Father upon a *pure act of believing*, and that will open thy soul to let it out unto the Lord in the communion of love.' Too easily and often we look within ourselves for crumbs of spiritual comfort. There is a place for healthy, gospel self-examination, but only when it is done in the light of the foundational truth that he loved us first and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

The great need for preachers today is not first to address felt needs, though I believe there is a place for that. First and imperatively we need to preach the great objective truths of the gospel. Nothing less will give God's people the anchor they need to keep their souls sure and steadfast in the world of swirling currents and controversies. 'Looking away to Jesus' is the principial movement of a spiritually healthy soul. Sin turns us in upon ourselves; the gospel turns us out to Christ. Look to Christ. He is all you need, clothed as he is with the blessings and benefits of the gospel.

Return to the Lord

Joshua 2: 12-17
Rev. Andrew Young
Cheltenham Presbyterian Church

A swarm of locusts is a living, moving, devouring nightmare. Let me share a few facts about them. Each locust can grow up to 15 cm in length. A swarm can cover up to 2,000 square miles. The rate at which they reproduce is alarming: when one female lays her eggs in June, by October of the same year she will have approximately 18 million living descendants. In any given swarm there can be 10 billion insects. They have been seen by sailors 1,200 miles out to sea and they have been known to block out the sunlight as they ride high on the winds. The noise they make is deafening: it is like a jet engine as their wings whirr and they crunch their jaws together. They bring devastation.

In 1960 in California a swarm covered over 200,000 acres of land and eye witnesses claimed that every inch of the ground was covered, to the extent that they were even stacked on top of one another. Everything was left bare – all vegetation, leaves, greenery – even the bark has been known to be stripped from trees. As if this wasn't awful enough, the after-effects can be as equally horrendous. Augustine recounts that a swarm which drowned at sea was then washed up on the coast and the

resulting putrefaction killed 800,000 people through the spread of various diseases. Suffice to say that a swarm of locusts is horrifying to experience.

This nightmare is the immediate context of Joel 2: 12-17. In 1: 1–2: 11 Joel tells of a locust plague which had struck Israel (1: 4). There had also been drought, famine and fires (1: 16-20) and the inevitable cessation of worship had ensued (1: 13). All of this foreshadowed the coming 'Day of the LORD', which, contrary to Jewish expectation, would involve the judgment not only of the nations but of God's people as well.

Furthermore, the wider context must be kept in view. The judgment that Israel was beginning to feel in the locusts was all about covenant blessing and covenant curse. Deuteronomy 28 records both the covenant blessings for obedience and the covenant curses for disobedience. Among these curses are included: the repetition of the plagues brought on Egypt–the eighth of which was locusts (28: 27); becoming a byword among the nations (28: 37; compare Joel 2: 17); and the bringing of locusts to the land (28: 38, 42). Thus Joel 2: 12-17 comes in the wake of covenant curse upon covenant people for covenant disobedience.

The pressing question that must have been on the minds of all Israelites in light of this is: What is to be done? What are the covenant people to do in response to this? Is there any way of reversing or removing this curse? Joel 2: 12-17 provides a wonderful answer to these searching enquiries, a resounding 'Yes!' Verse 11 ends with the despairing rhetorical question, 'Who can endure it?' Verse 12 follows immediately with '"Yet even now," declares the LORD....' Even at this eleventh hour; even when there appears to be no hope; even when covenant curse is already being seen and felt – the LORD still declares that there is a way back. The LORD still comes with words of grace and mercy, guiding his people out of the mess they have brought upon themselves. What a God of grace our God is! Whatever sin we may find ourselves in, whatever consequences we may be feeling because of that sin, our God, even as his hand of discipline and judgment is laid heavily upon us, can yet say, 'even now'.

What way out does the LORD provide for his people? He simply says, 'return to me.' God would have his people come back to him. He calls them to repent, and we can note five aspects of this returning and repenting.

1. Sincere repentance (vv. 12-13)

The LORD wants his people's return to be sincere. This repentance is often helpfully described as a complete change in direction. Yet it means more than this. It has at its heart the idea of moving away *from* something *to* something different. It is not just a change of path or direction, but a positive movement towards the LORD himself. Paul sums it up well: the Thessalonians had 'turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God' (1 Thess. 1: 9).

Sincerity is emphasized as the LORD requires this turning to be 'with all your heart' (v. 12). Yet God not only requires wholehearted devotion, but that it be broken-hearted as well. He goes on, 'rend your hearts and not your garments' (v. 13). Not only does the LORD want the hearts of his people, he wants those hearts to be contrite, penitent and broken before him, as they acknowledge their sin and throw themselves on his mercy.

In addition God desires our actions to conform to wholehearted, broken-hearted repentance. He requires 'fasting and weeping and mourning' (v. 12), all of which, as outward signs of repentance, must express the inward devotion and contrition for sin. God would have our hearts – the very centre of our beings. But he would also have our external gestures of worship and devotion working in tandem with this heart religion.

2. The motivation of repentance (v. 13)

The call to return to the LORD is repeated in verse 13, which now supplies the reason for such repenting. This motivation is found in nothing less than the very character of God. Just as the LORD revealed himself to Moses in Exodus 34, and just as David revelled in the love and mercy of God in Psalm 103, so here the LORD reminds his people what kind of God he is. He turns their attention to his grace, mercy, and covenant love. He reminds them that he is slow to anger. As in Jonah 4: 2, he even adds something new to this revelation of his character by saying that he 'relents over disaster'. In other words the only reason repentance is possible is because of who God is. It is the very nature of God that provides the motivation for repentance. The LORD calls his people to consider who he is again, to think again on his love and grace and mercy, and to have their eyes set on him.

This instructs us as we seek to confess our sin to God and to repent of all our evil doing. Whilst repentance must contain a 'sight and sense ... of the filthiness of sin', it must also have 'an apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ' (*Westminster Larger Catechism*, Q. 76). As we repent we must look out and consider the grace of God in Jesus Christ. This same grace and love should spur on our repentance and should motivate our returning to God.

3. The hope of repentance (v. 14)

Joel then introduces both an element of caution and of hope. He knows that God is not mechanical but merciful and that repentance is not like some input/output process where the result is guaranteed. Thus he says, 'Who knows whether he will not turn and relent?' He strikes the balance between not being restored apart from repentance and yet not being restored because of repentance. It is not our repentance that makes certain our forgiveness, but our gracious and compassionate God.

Yet equally a note of hope resonates throughout this verse. Joel anticipates God's turning and relenting, and blessing his people. It is as we return to God because of his grace that he turns to us in favour: And this blessing is the restoring of the very means of fellowship that had originally been ended because of the locusts (1: 9, 13). This is the hope of God's people, that God will not treat us

as our sin deserves, but will restore to us the very blessing and fellowship that was lost as a result of sin. And of course, with the coming of Christ this hope has been realized.

4. The urgency of repentance (vv. 15-16)

Verses 15-16 introduce a sudden change in pace: urgency is conveyed through staccato-like, fast repeated calls to action. This change communicates something of the exigencies of the situation. Repentance is to be seen as a pressing need. This was to be a priority for all of God's people, even those that had legitimate reasons to exempt themselves. Newly-wed couples were to forego the celebrations of their wedding day to participate in this act of contrition. What is striking about these repeated exhortations is their corporate nature. The full demographic spectrum is called to assemble, including infants. This cuts right across the rampant individualism that is so prevalent in the world, and sadly in the church, today. God is most interested in what his people do together as the body of Christ, and repentance is included in this. He would have all his people gather and as one body call on their God to forgive their sins. It is not only urgent that we repent, it is urgent that we repent as God's people.

5. The words of repentance (v. 17)

Having told his people how to repent, and why to repent, the LORD goes so far as to tell them the very words to use in repentance. With a distinct emphasis on the covenant status of God's people, the LORD instructs his servants to say: 'Spare your people LORD, and make not your heritage a reproach.' God would have his people act like his people, even as they repent of acting as if they were not his people. He would have them claim their covenantal privilege, even as they confess their lack of covenantal responsibility. In other words, the very act of crying out to God for mercy is itself a display of covenantal fidelity. Also the LORD would have them be mindful of his own reputation. 'Why should they say among the people, "Where is their God?"' Israel was a people who belonged to the only true and living God, and God would have them repent in accordance with this reality. The act of repentance is an act vital to the very heart of being in covenant with the LORD. It displays both that he is our God, and that we are his people.

It is hardly worth considering these verses without then reading on through verses 18ff. There the LORD has compassion on his people and restores the years the locusts have eaten. The devastation that the locusts caused is completely reversed in the abundance of the LORD's blessing, because where sin abounds, God's grace super-abounds. These are the results of such a returning to the LORD. And this is the kind of God we worship, who does not treat us as our sin deserves, but who in Jesus Christ blesses us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. Should we not, in light of such a loving, gracious and merciful God, be frequently returning to the LORD?

The Westminster Confession of Faith: on Scripture

Rev. Dr Chad Van Dixhoorn

Chad is Associate Minister of Grace Presbyterian Church (OPC) just outside Washington DC. He is also a senior research Fellow of Wolfson College, Cambridge, UK.

Chapter I. IV. The authority of the holy scripture, for which it ought to be believed and obeyed, dependeth not upon the testimony of any man or church, but wholly upon God, (who is truth itself,) the author thereof; and therefore it is to be received, because it is the word of God.
V. We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the Church to an high and reverend esteem of the holy scripture, and the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole, (which is to give all glory to God,) the full discovery it makes of the only way of man's salvation, the many other incomparable excellencies, and the entire perfection thereof, are arguments whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the word of God; yet, notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth, and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness by and with the word in our hearts.

God's word

The Confession begins by explaining why revelation, and especially written revelation, is necessary for God's people. It goes on to explain how the Bible is unique and holy because it is God-breathed, or inspired. In these paragraphs the discussion turns to the authority of Scripture, and the way in which Christians recognize that authority.

Paragraph four begins by reminding us that we need an adequate reason to obey and believe Holy Scripture. We must not obey the Bible simply because of the influence of other people, no matter how wise or impressive they might be as human beings. Nor is it a sure enough reason to trust the Scripture because we are told to do so by the church (although some churches would seriously disagree with this statement!)

The only authority sufficient to command our commitment to Scripture is God – the one who does not lie, and who is in fact, truth itself. As Peter explained to his readers in his Second Epistle, it is only God who provides a 'more sure word' for his people, and we would do well to heed it. We can see this by looking at the phenomenon of prophecy. The message did not come by the mere will of the prophet. On the contrary, 'holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit' (2 Pet. 1: 19, 21). This is true also of written

revelation, and Peter makes the link himself, telling us that this is how we are to see Scripture (2 Pet. 1: 20).

And so although this is the second letter of Peter, it is also a letter from God. God is the author of Scripture – a point that Paul makes with equal clarity in a letter to Timothy. In fact, there we are told that 'all Scripture is God-breathed' (2 Tim. 3: 16). It is in this context that we are told that Scripture is 'profitable' or 'useful' for us. It is because this is a Word from God that we take it as our doctrine and for our instruction; it is the divine authority of the Bible that calls us to use this book in such a way that our lives are reproved and corrected.

We receive this book because it is God's. Of course we do! After all, as the Apostle John points out, we routinely accept the word and witness of other people. And 'if we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God' is only greater (1 John 5: 9). This was the perspective of the Thessalonians. When they realized that Paul and his company were bringing them the word of God, they 'received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God' (1 Thess. 2: 13).

Our persuasion and assurance

We trust Scripture because it is God's Word – but how do we know that it is God's Word? Certainly one encouragement to see it as such is the testimony of the Christian church throughout the ages. After all, as Paul mentions in a letter to Timothy, 'the church of the living God' is 'a pillar and buttress of truth' (1 Tim. 3: 15). The witness through the ages of great churches and great churchmen to the reliability and authority of Scripture can certainly give us a 'high and reverend esteem of the Holy Scripture'. Today too, people are often drawn to read and trust the Scriptures because of the encouragement of a local church or a member of it.

An even clearer testimony to the authority of Scripture is Scripture itself. Its focus is heavenward, like no other book. Its teaching transforms. Its prose and poetry have moved men and women for thousands of years. And readers old and new continue to marvel at the way in which the various parts of the Bible inform and illumine each other. And this is only the beginning! Is there any other book which has so perfectly achieved its purpose of giving all glory to God? Is there another place where we can learn all that we need about the one way of salvation? Really, there are so many incomparable excellencies to which we could point, such overwhelming evidence of perfection, that we can only conclude that the Bible 'abundantly evidence[s] itself to be the word of God'. In a very real sense, we can say that Holy Scripture is self-authenticating.

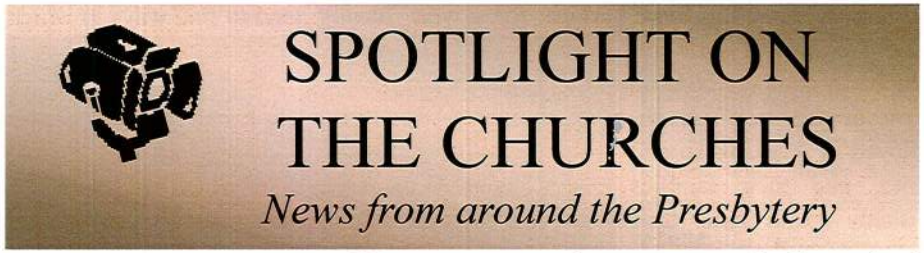
And 'yet, notwithstanding' the unique characteristics, effects and message of Scripture itself, a Christian's full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth, and divine authority of God's Word, is actually 'from the inward work of the Holy Spirit'.

You see, it is the Spirit who bears 'witness by and with the word in our hearts'. The close association of Spirit and word was evident long ago to the prophet Isaiah, who explained how the Spirit abides with God's word in the speech of God's people, from generation to generation (Isa. 59: 21). And when the Apostle John considers the 'unction' or 'anointing' of the Holy One, who is Christ, it is clear that this anointing is the Holy Spirit. This is significant because John goes on to link this anointing Christian knowledge and discernment of the truth, not least the truth which he was actually writing at that moment (1 John 2: 20, 27; cf. 2: 21, 26).

What John points out in his epistles and his gospel is that the Spirit of truth guides Christians to see, hear and receive God's truth (e.g., John 16: 13-14). Paul puts it another way in 1 Corinthians 2, where he reminds us that the Spirit was given to us to reveal the deep things of God. Indeed, 'we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God'—for the precise reason 'that we might know' God and his gifts (1 Cor. 2: 10-12).

We were created to recognize truth, a gift that was misused, and then left tattered after the fall. But God in his mercy has given us his Spirit who testifies to us as we read his Word that this is his revelation, his gift to us. The same Spirit who helps us to see Jesus as our Saviour and Lord is the one who helps us to grasp the Word of life, recognizing its authority, and trusting its promises.

It is just like what Jesus said so long ago about the good shepherd. He speaks, and his sheep know his voice. Praise God that he continues to speak through Scripture, and that we are enabled to hear the voice of our Good Shepherd. For it is in Holy Scripture that we wonderfully discover 'the things freely given to us by God'.



Bethel, Cardiff

In January one of our members, Phyllis Tucker, went to be with the Lord; she will be greatly missed. We are upholding Peter Tucker and their children in prayer at this time.

We were encouraged to see a good attendance at a Christmas carol service, particularly from parents of Sunday School children. Another couple from the local community have begun attending regularly on Sunday mornings in response to a leaflet received months before. The daughter of two of our members has recently become a member. It is an encouragement when covenant children come back to the church as adults. She and her husband have recently

had a baby who will soon be baptized.

The mother & toddler group meets each week and has provided contact with a number of families in the community. Pray that we can build effectively on this. We hope to have a Bible Club at Easter and to leaflet the area again for this.

Marcus Hobson

Bury St Edmunds

The church was encouraged at the end of the year as ten were received into communicant membership, and three children were baptized. We were blessed with three infants born safely last year, and, God willing, we should see a further three this year. We are now a little reduced in numbers because five of the men are deployed in Afghanistan and Iraq, and their families usually spend some time away with their relatives during deployments.

Bryony Macintyre and Catherine Pape are planning to go to university in the autumn, and are looking to the Lord to guide them. Agnes McGrane is half way through her degree and begins her final year also this autumn. It has been good to see younger ones coming into the church as our children are reaching the point of moving away from home. We have been encouraged by a good attendance at Sunday School.

Ian Pape finished a course of radiotherapy in December following surgery to remove a brain tumour. There is to be an assessment in March whether further treatment is required. The Lord wonderfully provided a local job for Ian that he started in January.

We're very grateful for all who support us in supply ministry. Matthew Holst, who is in Cambridge for a year having finished his seminary training, is scheduled to take services on one Lord's Day per month. Please remember us in the matter of a permanent minister of the Lord's appointment for this congregation.

Kevin McGrane

Durham

At the time of writing we have just had the installation service for Bill Schweitzer as church planting minister at Gateshead. About 100 people attended. Members of Presbytery took part and Bill reaffirmed vows he had already made at his ordination. The ever relevant Zechariah 4: 6 was the sermon text: 'Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord Almighty.'

We have now to settle down in the new dynamic. We've enjoyed being an enlarged congregation of about 80 for several months while extra families joined with us waiting for our daughter church to begin Sunday worship. This has given us real contact and friendship with a good many of the other congregation and we intend to find ways in which to strengthen those bonds of fellowship and not drift apart. Indeed it was laid on us at the communion service which we held together the following day that part of discerning the body of Christ involves just such a thing. We have 30 communicant members remaining and a congregation of just about 50 – when everyone's there! It's putting us back therefore about six or seven years. We look to the Lord to continue his blessing on us, which we have always known in the past, even when we were few and even in hard and difficult times.

We have a baptism to look forward to on our first Sunday in the new era. Who knows what else the Lord will bring?

Brenda Norton

Gateshead

We are thankful for the installation service on 31 January, and for the participation of several men of the presbytery. We are also thankful for the joint communion service on 1 February, which officially set aside those who will become Gateshead Presbyterian Church.

Our first Sunday meeting in Gateshead was on 8 February. We meet at Lobley Hill Community Centre. See our website: **www.gatesheadpres.org.uk.** We ask you to pray for us: for continued unity at Gateshead and also with the Durham congregation; for wisdom and guidance in all our planning; God's provision for all our needs, including the completion of Bill's MTW support; for protection from the attacks of the evil one; and for God to bring about a great victory for himself in this dark corner of the land.

Immanuel, Cardiff

It is nearly ten years since Immanuel Presbyterian Church began. Until now the church has been led by its three elders. Recently it has been felt desirable to strengthen the session by the addition of new elders. Pastoral demands have been increasing and the move into our new building also presents us with additional work. We pray that the Lord will guide us to bring forward men after his own heart.

In January, a 'mums and tots' group started and we have received the encouragement of welcoming several from the district around the church. This is the first contact of this kind with our new neighbours. Peter has been invited to take an assembly in the local school, and we hope that this may lead to further opportunities to present God's Word there. We continue to pray for the salvation of young people who have come into the church from time to time.

Immanuel's links with the Reformed Liberated congregation of Amersfoort East go back to 1988. In November, Paul and Peter, with elders from Bethel, visited the Netherlands to renew fellowship with them. We

Bill and Pam Schweitzer and their children.

have been thankful for this contact and the brotherly love and care which has been shown over the years. We continue to support Sebastian Smolarz in his ministry in Poland.

In Spring, the church plans once again to hold its annual 'retreat' in Bala. It is always a delight to welcome brothers and sisters from other churches. As was the case last year, so this year, the retreat was fully booked almost immediately.

Mave Humphries

East Hull

The Lord has been bountiful in the blessings and privileges He has showered on us as a congregation. We have been specially grateful for very generous financial gifts from our friends in the Berkum Church in the Netherlands.

The new building has enabled us to embark on various outreach enterprises that are proving worthwhile. The Parents and Toddlers group and the After School club for the next age group are gaining momentum. The children and their parents are happy, keen and responsive. The monthly coffee mornings are a big success, attracting friends and relatives of members particularly, but also folk passing the building. This is a valuable opportunity for witness.

We would value prayer for members seeking professional employment, that their domestic arrangements may be speedily resolved.

We would also value prayer for backslidden and unbelieving spouses of members—precious souls that we would dearly love to see in the Kingdom.

Please pray for the minister and office bearers that they may be given wisdom to deal effectively with pastoral problems.

We would especially ask for prayer for our City of Hull which is the centre of much sin and wickedness, praying that the Lord will show mercy to a city with such a wealth of Christian history.

We share in the joy of Bill Schweitzer's installation as pastor to the new Gateshead congregation, desiring the Lord's blessing on all his endeavours in the gospel.

Margaret Penticost

Cheltenham

We had our annual joint Christmas Day Service with Naunton Lane Evangelical Church. We were encouraged by the attendance of 63 people, drawn from both our congregations, other local churches and the neighbourhood. Rev. Andy Young gave a short message and had the opportunity for good discussion with individuals afterwards. Over the next few months he has been invited to take some of Naunton Lane's mid-week Bible Studies. At our own mid-week meeting we have been greatly blessed in studying the Psalms.

Our Church is sending out a team once more to Mangalia on the Black Sea, Romania, 4-11 April. This will help to strengthen the links we already have with Pastor Gilberto and the Christian Presbyterian Association Mangalia. The team of six hope to do some practical work, e.g., painting in the church building, building a fence in the church garden, sewing in the Dorcas Club. We expect to renew contact with the children who 'graduated' from the 'This is My Chance' programme (run by the church) into the state school, taking them on an outing to a Dolphinarium and McDonald's. We hope to visit a new work Pastor Gilberto has begun 3 km. away. Rev. Andy Young will preach several times – with the help of an interpreter! We know from last year's experience that this trip will be mutually encouraging.

We are thankful to God that we have such a warm and loving fellowship and this is continually shown in the support we have for one another. Several of our members and friends have been going through challenging times recently and we recognize God has been working through all these difficulties. We continue to pray that we may grow spiritually and numerically here as a Church in Cheltenham.

Audrey Johnston

Chelmsford

We move into 2009 with much gratitude for our network of churches. Thank you for your prayers for young Rafe Louis and his family. Rafe completed his course of radiotherapy in mid-January, and it has been good to see him in church and chasing his younger brother around – after the worship service of course! Rafe has an extensive programme of chemotherapy scheduled at intervals throughout 2009, so we seek the Lord's blessing on this treatment and pray for ongoing strength for Derrick, Cheryl and the extended family.

We are mindful of the health struggles of our older members too, especially in the winter months, and of the need to appreciate their contribution to our fellowship. Among them is retired minister, Rev. Peter West, a much loved member of our congregation, who travels quite a distance to join us and to minister on occasions.

John Scott has just completed a week of lunchtime talks at Writtle College Mission Week, and is about to start another Christianity Explored Course for a small group on Monday evenings.

Matthew Ferguson, the youngest son of David and Ruth, will travel to Peru in March to serve with 'Latin Link' for four months, assisting local churches in practical activities and evangelical programmes.

The Ferguson family mourned the loss of David's mother shortly before Christmas. Although not so well known to our church family, Mrs Ferguson Senior was well known in our area, and influenced many lives for the gospel. We give thanks for the testimony and challenge of her life.

Our elders are currently investigating the possibility of having a young man from Holland spend time with us and to help with ministry amongst young people and students.

Finally we are delighted that Christopher Dethridge, studying in Newcastle, has been much encouraged and strengthened in his faith by the fellowship he enjoys there. Thank you for your prayers for Christopher and for his mother Alex and her other four sons.

Julie Kavanagh

Other congregations—see page 24

The Evangelical Reformed Church in Sweden

A short time ago, the EPCEW was much smaller than it is now, but God has been doing a work and we rejoice–'the kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed'!

God has planted a mustard seed in Sweden, the ERCS. Sweden (pop. 9m) is a liberal, socialist country in which the (liberalized) Lutheran Church retains some official standing, but Christianity has little influence. There are several Free Churches which tend to be 'contemporary' and populist. The so-called 'growth' churches are generally charismatic.

The ERCS has just one congregation, in the town of Tranås (pop. 15,000), made up of about 40 members (including children). It is a pioneering work and might well be the only church of its kind in the whole of Scandinavia. It began as a result of the labours of three men: Gary Glen Johnson, a lone Mission to The World missionary, evangelizing through sport; David Bergmark, a native Swede who studied in the US and returned to pastor the new cause; and David Leander, who also studied in the US and is proposed as the new pastor at Tranås.

In 2007, ERCS asked to join the EPCEW and asked for help to license and ordain a minister and an elder. In October 2008 a delegation from EPCEW visited Tranås and reported back. Presbytery then set up a commission to carry the matter forward. The commmission will visit Tranås at the end of February 2009 with a view to finalizing matters in time for Presbytery on 7 March 2009.

The delegation of October 2008, consisting of Brian Norton, Stephen Dancer, and Richard Holst, rejoiced to see the spiritual vitality, soundness of doctrine, and vision for growth of the brothers and sisters of Tranås. Both David and Gary are looking to extend their work eastwards, Gary to Linköping in 2010 and David to Stockholm, where he already ministers to a Bible-study group (the Westminster group), possibly in 2009. That is why the licensing, ordination and installation of David Leander as pastor at Tranås and the ordination of Andreas Jäderberg as part of the team, is a matter of some urgency.

If everything goes to plan, the ERCS will become a kind of outpost church of our connection until it is able to form its own presbytery. Its ministers and elders will become members of our presbytery. In this way we hope to encourage each other. 'The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches.'

—Richard Holst

(Picture: David Bergmark and Stephen Dancer)

George Whitefield
Part 1

Dr Paul Corney

Paul is an elder of Immanuel, Cardiff

A forgotten soldier of Christ

George Whitefield (1714-70) was ordained to the ministry in the Church of England at Gloucester Cathedral on 20 June 1736 at 22 years of age. The young ordinand wrote, 'When the bishop laid his hand upon me, I gave myself up to be a martyr for Him who hung upon the cross for me. I have thrown myself blindfold, and, I trust, without reserve, into His almighty hands.'

Over the next 34 years without interruption Whitefield continued preaching the gospel. He died suddenly, aged 56, in 1770. It has been estimated that he preached in public on over 18,000 occasions. This equates to more than twelve times a week for 34 years. It was not unusual for him to spend 40 hours a week in the pulpit! In addition, he exhorted privately and wrote thousands of letters of encouragement. His preaching drew huge crowds of up to 30,000 strong from all social classes. He travelled enormous distances throughout Britain and Ireland. Furthermore, his work in the American colonies was remarkable. He made the perilous Atlantic crossing on thirteen occasions and travelled vast distances, preaching from New York to Georgia, on the eastern seaboard.

Not long ago, a friend of mine asked a guide at Gloucester Cathedral for information about the Reverend George Whitefield. He replied, 'George who?' While John Wesley is widely remembered, Whitefield, Wesley's close friend, is often overlooked, forgotten, or misrepresented. Yet J. C. Ryle reckoned him to be 'the greatest preacher of the gospel England has ever seen.'

In this article, I want to raise your estimation of George Whitefield and his warm Calvinistic Methodism. If nothing else, I hope this article may prompt you to read, or perhaps re-read, *The Journals of George Whitefield*. Charles H. Spurgeon wrote of these journals, 'Often as I have read his life, I am conscious of distinct quickening whenever I turn to it. HE LIVED. Other men seem to be only half-alive; but Whitefield was all life, fire, wing, force.'

Whitefield in Britain

It is difficult to describe adequately Whitefield's labours in England. For

many years, he roved the country during Spring and Summer. His itinerary is exhausting to trace, as he continued without rest from town to town, often preaching several times each day. The distances, the preparation, the crowds, the opposition, all testify to an astonishing labour in the Lord's service. Travel on horseback or by carriage was slow and difficult. Roads were poor.

However, the effect of his preaching was electric. People of all denominations and rank crowded to hear him. Within three years of beginning his ministry, Whitefield found it difficult to reach the pulpit because of the crowds. And it grieved him that many were forced to go away without hearing the Word. In 1739, he wrote, 'This first set me thinking of preaching outdoors. I mentioned it to some friends who looked upon it as a mad idea.' However, a month later, in February 1739, Whitefield spoke to the miners of Kingswood in Bristol. He writes, 'I went up on a hill and spoke to as many people as came to me.' This set a new pattern and by April 1739 Whitefield was preaching to crowds of up to 30,000 from a mound, which became known as 'Whitefield's mount', in the large green area of Moorfields in London. He writes about these early days of open air preaching, 'Time would fail me, were I to relate how many have been awakened, and how many pray for me. The great day will discover all!'

Sadly, many churches were shut to him and ministers and bishops denounced him as a dangerous enthusiast. Yet he was undeterred and eager to preach in the fields. His opponents were many. Rumours of his death were started, open threats to his person were issued, stones were thrown, but Whitefield pressed on.

Wales

'I think Wales is excellently well prepared for the gospel of Christ.'

In Cardiff, 1739, Whitefield met Howell Harris for the first time and wrote, 'When I first saw him, my heart was knit closely to him, I wanted to catch some of his fire, and gave him the right hand of fellowship with all my heart... we spent the evening telling one another what God had done for our souls. A divine and strong sympathy seemed to be between us, and I resolved to promote his interest with all my might. We took an account of the several societies and agreed on such measures as seemed most conducive to promote the common interest of our Lord.'

Throughout their lives they maintained close fellowship through regular correspondence. They became labourers in the gospel together in Wales, organizing numerous Methodist societies. Whitefield chaired meetings of the Welsh Methodist Connexion of societies, including its first meetings in 1742 at Watford Farm near Caerphilly. Despite the thousands who were being awakened to follow the Lord Jesus Christ, Whitefield and Harris had no intention of establishing separate churches. Whitefield wrote, 'Our societies were never intended to be set up in opposition to public worship, by law established, but only in imitation of the early Christians, who continued daily with one accord in the Temple, and yet in fellowship building one another up, and exhorting one another from house to house.' Indeed, throughout his life Whitefield remained an ordained minister of the Church of England. However, Whitefield and Harris preached Calvinistic doctrine in contrast with the widespread Arminian thinking of the day. Their preaching demonstrated a vibrant Christianity which contrasted with the nominalism in many established churches. There was an emphasis on the living heart that burns for God. Whitefield stressed the necessity of being born again of the Holy Spirit. This was shared wholeheartedly by the Calvinistic Methodists who were eventually constituted as the Presbyterian Church of Wales.

> Are you of Christ? If so, I love you with all my heart.

Whitefield's visits to Wales were frequent and he ranged from north to south. As you read Whitefield's journals, you will hear of the great encouragement he received. He was strengthened by the 'Welsh fire'. His connections with Wales became even stronger in 1741 when, in Caerphilly near Cardiff, he married Elizabeth James of Abergavenny.

Whitefield sowed richly in Wales and rejoiced in the great harvests that were gathered. Later generations would know times of even greater blessing.

Lady Selina Shirley is better known as the Countess of Huntingdon. This godly Christian woman joined the first Methodist society in Fetter's Lane, London, in 1739. Hearing Whitefield preaching, she devoted her substantial means to promoting the gospel. Specifically, she requested that Whitefield be her personal chaplain. On many occasions she brought noble lords and ladies of the land into her home to hear him preach. Often Whitefield would say to such, 'Come, then, and lay yourself at the foot of Jesus.' The Countess funded the establishment of up to sixty-four Calvinistic Methodist chapels in England and a training college for young ministers at Trevecca, in South Wales. While Whitefield never became a wealthy man, some wealthy gentry delighted in his ministry and did much to advance the gospel. One notable example was the Earl of Dartmouth, Secretary of State for the Colonies.

Scotland

Whitefield enjoyed some of the greatest blessings of God in his fourteen visits to Scotland. He never forgot the scenes in Edinburgh and Glasgow in 1742. 'For nearly twenty eight days together, in Glasgow and Edinburgh, I preached to near 10,000 saints every day.' He cried out, 'May I die preaching.' At Cambuslang, he assisted a number of ministers during the communion season. He spoke to huge crowds, thought to be more than 30,000. 'People sat unwearied till two in the morning. You could scarce

walk a yard, without treading on some, either rejoicing in God for mercies received or crying out for more. Thousands and thousands have I seen melted down under the word and power of God.'

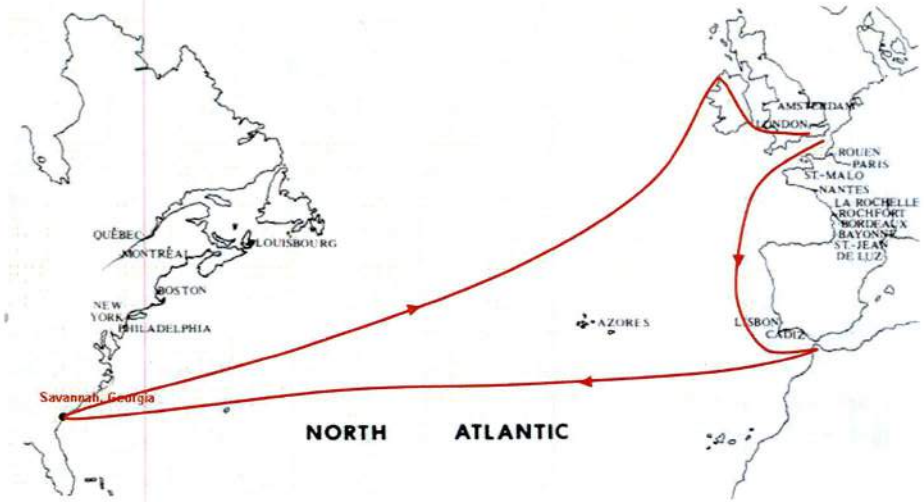
America

Whitefield's journals record his first and second visits to the American colonies in 1738 and 1740. He continued until he died during his seventh visit in 1770. Whitefield's impact upon young men gives a taste of his wider influence on the emerging nation. The secretary of Harvard wrote, 'Various gentlemen's sons are now so full of zeal for the cause of Christ, and of love to souls, as to devote themselves entirely to the studies of divinity.' In the Boston area it was reported that twenty ministers traced their conversion directly to Whitefield's ministry. Whitefield felt such a burden for America. He undertook the dangerous Atlantic crossings and brought great sums of money from England to set up and sustain a large orphanage in Georgia. He guided the establishment of Christian schools and colleges, some famous to this day: such are Pennsylvania University and Dartmouth College. He preached tirelessly from church to church, exposing unconverted ministers and exalting the Saviour.

Even in 1880, a century after his death, the *New York Times* remembered Whitefield's visits to Philadelphia: 'His favourite rostrum was the steps of the old court-house. The effect of his preaching was to change the tone of society there. The whole town grew religious; ball rooms and concert saloons were closed, public amusements were discontinued; religious conversation became general and only religious books would sell. Many persons would come a distance of twenty miles to listen to the eloquent young preacher, who was then not over twenty-three years of age.'

...to be continued

Part 2: Why was Whitefield so effective?



Christianity and Science

Kevin McGrane

Kevin is an elder of Bury St Edmunds Presbyterian Church. He studied physics at Oxford and electronic engineering at Southampton, and works as a design consultant in magnetics. His innovations won the Queen's Award for Technological Achievement, and resulted in the grant of over 40 patents. In 2006, his book *An Account of the Life and Death of Mrs Elizabeth Bury* was published by Reformation Heritage Books. Elizabeth Bury (1644-1720) has an entry in *The Biographical Dictionary of Women in Science*.

No war between science and Christianity

It is commonly believed that there is a war between modern science and Christianity, but such a view has long been discredited by historians and sociologists. For example, no less a figure than Steven Shapin, Franklin L. Ford Professor of the History of Science at Harvard University, notes that 'In the late Victorian period it was common to write about the "warfare between science and religion" and to presume that the two bodies of culture must always have been in conflict. However, it is a very long time since these attitudes have been held by historians of science.' Moreover, Gary Ferngren, a professor of history at Oregon State University, adds that 'Although popular images of controversy continue to exemplify the supposed hostility of Christianity to new scientific theories, studies have shown that Christianity has often nurtured and encouraged scientific endeavour.'

It is certain that there is a war between Christianity and unbelief, but to portray the Christian faith as being at war with *science* is nonsense, because the Faith pursues, embraces and delights in all truth, since all truth is from God. Natural science is simply one aspect of the universe of truth: the truth about the natural world, which God created and upholds. There can never be any truth or fact found by natural science that is inimical to the Christian faith. Neither is there, strictly speaking, such a thing as 'Christian science' because such a term implies that truth can be institutionalized, whereas truth is universal, and should be universally disseminated and applied. On the other hand, unbelievers have a great deal to fear from the truth, much of which is evident, but which, consciously or unconsciously, they suppress with vain reasonings (Romans 1: 18-22), constantly rationalizing and distorting evidence to maintain their opposition to the truth. Chief among these, in the opinion of John Calvin, was Aristotle, the darling of the atheists, who was 'a man of genius and learning' yet whose 'constant aim was to entangle and perplex God's overruling providence' and who

perversely 'employed his naturally acute powers of mind to extinguish all light' (Commentary on Ps. 107).

As this year marks the five hundredth anniversary of the birth of John Calvin, it is instructive to consider his attitude to science. With regard to the universality of truth, Calvin wrote in his *Institutes* that 'If we reflect that the Spirit is the only fountain of truth, we will be careful...not to reject or condemn truth wherever it appears', and that since 'the Lord has been pleased to assist us by the work of the ungodly in physics, dialectics, mathematics, and other similar sciences, let us avail ourselves of it lest...we be justly punished for our sloth.' Accordingly, in his commentary on 1 Corinthians, Calvin denounced anti-intellectual fanatics who 'furiously declaim against all the liberal arts and sciences,' for he saw that 'the liberal arts, and all the sciences by which wisdom is acquired, are gifts of God.' With regard to astronomy, he declared in his commentary on Genesis that 'this study is not to be reprobated, because some frantic persons are wont boldly to reject whatever is unknown to them. For astronomy is not only pleasant, but also very useful to be known: it cannot be denied that this art unfolds the admirable wisdom of God.' As such, he commends it to all Christians, insofar as 'they who have the leisure and capacity ought not to neglect this kind of exercise'.

Christianity the mother of modern science

The factors behind the rise of modern science have long fascinated comparative sociologists. It is increasingly admitted by sociologists and social historians - those who stand back and make it their business to survey and assess cultural and historical influences over the long term - that Christianity alone was the nursing mother of modern science. In the opinion of Toby Huff, Professor of Sociology at the University of Massachusetts, sociologists such as Benjamin Nelson correctly identified that 'the road to modern science was paved with stepping stones fashioned in the argot of Christian theology', and that the idea of conscience (which was absent, for example, in Islam) was 'central to empowerment of men as rational actors'. Christianity alone provided the necessary ethical basis for *universal* communities of discourse and participation, which Nelson saw was 'worked out most clearly in the nexus between Christian theology and law, above all in the writings of John Calvin' (Huff).

Many of the factors that gave rise to modern science are traceable to a Christian perspective. For example, the view that time is linear rather than cyclical: that the universe had a start, a central event (the coming of Christ), and a culmination at the Second Coming; that the universe is the creation of a rational God, who created man in his image as rational, who is able to comprehend a rational creation and explore it in a rational way; that man has a conscience; that the universe is subject to law; that all truth, wherever it is found, is to be embraced as having its origin in God; and that the pursuit of science can bring praise and glory to God.

Thus the world's very first scientific body, the Royal Society, founded in the 1660s, was constituted to promote 'the sciences of natural things and of useful arts, to the glory of God the Creator'. The chief founder of this Royal Society, and its first Secretary, was the Calvinist John Wilkins DD, who became Bishop of Chester. Amongst the original fellows of the Royal Society were very many devout Christians, for example, John Wallis, secretary to the Westminster Assembly (1643-9), chief architect of the Shorter Catechism, and England's finest mathematician until Newton. Another was Robert Boyle, the 'father of modern chemistry'.

Many who subsequently made the greatest advances in modern science were devout Christians. In my own sphere of expertise, electricity and magnetism, this is especially clear. Michael Faraday, the 'father of electricity and magnetism' was a ruling elder, and declared that 'The book of nature which we have to read is written by the finger of God', and that 'The beauty of electricity, or of any other force, is not that the power is mysterious and unexpected, but that it is under law'. James Clerk Maxwell, the 'father of electromagnetism' declared, 'I think that men of science as well as other men need to learn from Christ, and I think that Christians whose minds are scientific are bound to study science that this view of the glory of God may be as extensive as their being is capable of.' Sir William Thomson (Lord Kelvin), who was active in the application of electricity and magnetism, stated, 'I have long felt that there was a general impression in the non-scientific world, that the scientific world believes science has discovered ways of explaining all the facts of nature without adopting any definite belief in a Creator. I have never doubted that this impression was utterly groundless.'

From what quarter, then, did false ideas arise about Christianity and science being in opposition? Rodney Stark, Distinguished Professor of the Social Sciences at Baylor University, identifies that 'the claim of an inevitable and bitter warfare between religion and science has, for more than three centuries, been the primary polemical device used in the atheist attack on faith. From Thomas Hobbes through Carl Sagan and Richard Dawkins, false claims about religion and science have been used as weapons in the battle to "free" the human mind from the "fetters of faith".' Stark adds '...there is no inherent conflict between religion and science, but...*Christian theology was essential for the rise of science.*'

Atheistic naturalism the enemy of science

Whereas Indians, Chinese, Greeks, Persians and Arabs at various times made significant contributions to mathematics and the natural sciences, yet none of their cultures were able to sustain scientific progress, but actually caused it to be arrested and regress. The factors in those cultures that were responsible for degrading scientific progress can be identified, and also appear strongly in atheistic naturalism, whose dominance in the press, the

(Continued on page 22)

universities, and the scientific societies can therefore be expected to yield the same results. It is instructive to study historical parallels from the past, for example when Islam a thousand years ago suppressed and purged scientific endeavour that did not serve its own ends, denied any neutral forums for sharing ideas, and banned the printing press in order to suppress dissemination of new ideas and findings. We can see this as an attempt to institutionalize science.

What is really going on in our day is that the proponents of atheistic naturalism are redefining science in their own terms, and then using corrupt science forged on their own anvils as propaganda tools and weapons against the Christian faith. Denying promotion, resources, funding, equipment, and publishing opportunities to those who will not serve the atheist agenda are now commonplace tactics. It is brazen to the extent that prominent atheist scientists, Nobel laureates among them, openly promote the view that those who believe in God have not the necessary intellectual integrity to be scientists, and so quite openly conspire and lobby for the denigration and expulsion of theists from positions of influence. It is increasingly apparent that the only scientific beliefs being widely promoted today are those that serve the religion of atheism, and airtime and media opportunities are being more and more denied to those whose results, hypotheses and theories will not fall down and worship the golden image which has been set up. Once again, 'Truth has stumbled in the public squares, and uprightness cannot enter. Truth is lacking, and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey' (Isaiah 59: 14-15). All of this can be described as trying to institutionalize science in the service of atheism. The collateral damage, of course, is the destruction of science itself. Thus it is far closer to the truth to state, as Alvin Plantinga has done, that 'People like Dawkins hold that there is a conflict between science and religion...the truth of the matter, however, is that the conflict is between science and naturalism, not between science and belief in God...'

Because we, like all men, live through times of change, our own perceptions distort the reality that over the last 100 years the rate of scientific and technological advance has slowed dramatically compared to the previous 400 years. Why? Because atheistic naturalism, which has come to dominate the scientific community, is steadily degrading the very basis for scientific endeavour. The reason why the effects of this corrosion have not yet been felt or seen to the degree that might be expected is because of the strength of the foundations laid by Christian society, upon which atheism still depends. But as the rot becomes advanced we can expect the decay and collapse of science to be rapid.

The necessity of faith for scientific endeavour

So much in our culture is taken for granted without appreciating the foundation and rationale of its ethics, values and principles of working. Yet whatever one believes about the behaviour of the universe is a matter of faith, including concepts as fundamentally important to scientific pursuit as the existence of laws of nature and of cause and effect. For the Christian, their existence is a matter of revelation; the atheist has no basis for belief in their existence other than blind faith in his own materialist principles; and the Muslim has traditionally denied their existence. The renowned Muslim philosopher al-Ghazali wrote that any observed relationship between cause and effect was merely a delusion, as all actions and phenomena are immediate interventions of Allah without second causes. Therefore the very ideas of established laws of nature and second causes were regarded within Islam as blasphemous, as were the normal scientific questions of 'how' and 'why', rather than just the 'what'. It is not difficult to imagine the deadening effect this had on scientific endeavour. How different from the spirit of Calvin, who, in his commentary on Jeremiah, could speak of the creator God 'who fixed all the laws of nature which remain unchangeable', and whose 'faithfulness as to the laws of nature changes not'.

Scientific treatises in Arabic found their way to western Christendom in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Those with a Christian worldview imagined their authors to be masters who must have been held in highest esteem in the societies from which they came. Nothing could be further from the truth: many of them had been in hiding, in exile, pilloried, persecuted, and condemned, and had needed to operate covertly. As Sa'id al'Andalusi had remarked already in the eleventh century, the pursuit of the rational sciences had become a tainted and dangerous exercise in the Muslim world. For three hundred years Islam was a minority religion in the Arabic-speaking world, when many of the best scientists were neither Arabs nor Muslims, but merely wrote in Arabic, the *lingua franca*. But a dominant Islam tolerated only those studies that could be put to the service of its religion, principally medicine, arithmetic (for dividing inheritances), astronomy and geometry (for calculating times and directions for prayers). What we today term the natural sciences were branded the 'foreign sciences' by Muslims, and were not taught in the madrasas. Philosophy, logic and the natural sciences, insofar as they were not in the service of strictly religious matters, were deprecated and variously described as 'useless', 'ungodly', 'repudiated', 'forbidden', and 'unbelief'. Whatever could not be institutionalized was rejected.

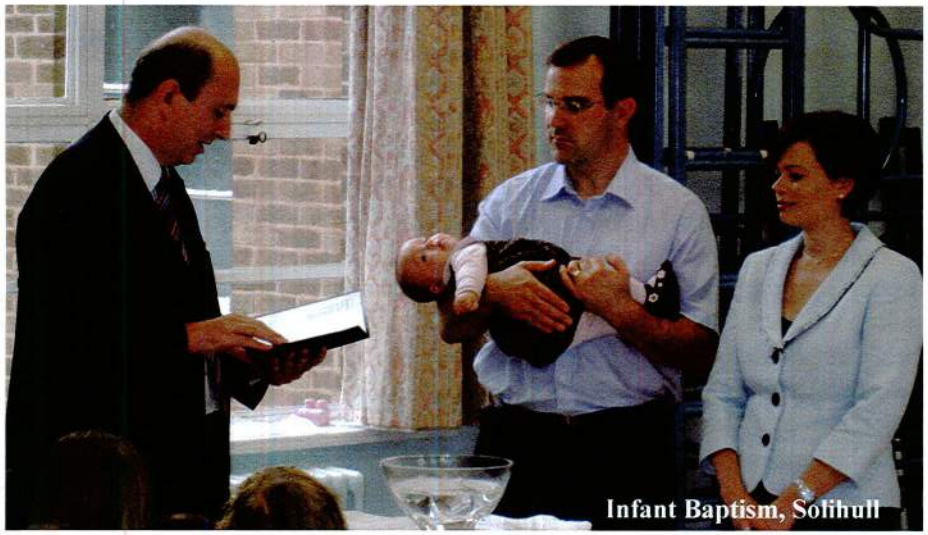
If science could not be taught in the Islamic world, neither could it easily be disseminated because the printing press was resisted by Islam until well into the nineteenth century, and possession of printed material was banned from as early as 1485. In fact, the first mass-produced material printed in Arabic in the Arab-speaking world was the Bible – on a press imported into Beirut by American missionaries in the mid-nineteenth century, four hundred years

after the widespread use of printing in the Christian world.

Toby Huff succinctly sums the matter up with respect to the necessary conditions for science to flourish: 'Insofar as science is concerned, individuals must be conceived to be endowed with reason, the world must be thought to be a rational and consistent whole, and various levels of representation, participation, and discourse must be available. It is precisely here that one finds the great weaknesses of Arabic-Islamic civilization as an incubator of modern science.' Islam was defective on all three counts, and the parallels with atheism are too close to be overlooked. Of the three necessary conditions that Huff identifies, the first two are articles of the Christian faith (cf. Westminster Confession of Faith Chapters IV and V), which atheism has no reason to believe, and the third, which atheists are desperately attempting to restrict, is a product uniquely of Christian ethics and society, especially of applied Calvinism. The prognosis for science in the hands of atheists is not promising, and Christians should stand ready to defend and recover the truth that is being trodden under foot, to the praise and glory of God.

Not forgetting these churches....

We have not been able to include reports from Blackburn, Cambridge and Solihull in this issue but they need our prayers. Rev. Ian Hamilton (Cambridge) has suffered some physical weakness recently. Matthew Holst has begun to assist Ian in the ministry there, an arrangement for one year. Dr Stephen Dancer continues in Solihull, a challenging, pioneering work.



Infant Baptism, Solihull

EVANGELICAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN ENGLAND AND WALES

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Location Fecit Brow

Ribchester
Sunday 3:00 pm
Tel. As Above

BURY ST EDMUNDS
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Sunday 10:30 and 6:00
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Ch Tel. 029 2059 5000
Email revtmatocha@btconnect.com
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Minister Rev. Dr Peter Naylor
Tel. 029 2040 5750
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Sunday 10:30 and 6:00
Sunday School 9:40
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Email Johnandrewscott@yahoo.co.uk
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Location Hall St. Methodist Church CM2 0HG

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Sunday 10:30 and 6:30
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DURHAM
Minister Rev. Brian Norton
Tel. 0191 384 0504
Email 2bn@o2.co.uk
Sunday 10:30 and 3:30
Location "The Chapel", Laburnum Ave (off Hawthorn Tce.)

GATESHEAD
Minister Rev. Dr Bill Schweitzer
Tel. 07939071404
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Location Lobley Hill Community Centre 47-49 Scafell Gardens Gateshead NE11 9LS

HULL
Minister Rev. Bill McCully
Tel 01482 706413
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Sunday 10:30 & 6:00
Location R/O 336 Holderness Road (through short passageway)

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