
Editor's Notes

When I was approached about the possibility of becoming editor of *Foundations* I could think of many reasons why I should decline the offer. However there was one reason that weighed heavily enough to tilt the balance in favour of acceptance and that was my conviction that theology matters to pastors and churches. I believe passionately that as evangelicals we need to take theology seriously if we are to remain faithful to Christ and to make an impact on our culture. I hope that in a small way that *Foundations* will help pastors and churches to this end. My aim is not that the journal be a repository of scholarly articles that will be of little immediate interest to many. Such articles are important and necessary, but there are a number of a good journals in which they can appear. My aim is to produce a journal twice a year that will help busy pastors and other church leaders to think theologically about their ministries, churches and the wider Christian world. I want *Foundations* to become the most stimulating, informative, exciting and even enjoyable theological journal on the market. And I make no apology for the last of those adjectives; for theology should be nothing if not enjoyable. Theology is one of the ways in which we can glorify God by enjoying him.

But if my vision for *Foundations* is to be fulfilled I will need a lot of help. Happily I am building on the excellent work of my predecessor Eryl Davies. I have always looked forward to receiving *Foundations* and never thought that one day I would be in the position of having to come up with the goods. I am beginning to appreciate the headaches Eryl must have had as deadlines loomed. If *Foundations* is to work it will require several things from its readers. First, it will require that people write articles. I can commission some things, but I would love to have enough manuscripts arriving that would give me the luxury of having to select the best ones for publication. We need pastors who are thinking and writing on crucial theological subjects. Please do not misunderstand me; I am not looking for fully developed Don Carsons or Sinclair Fergusons – though we need people like them and there may be some real potential out there. Your efforts may be more modest, but nevertheless may be of benefit to others. You may also know of work that someone has done, perhaps a paper given in a fraternal or at a conference. Please tell me or get the person to send his paper to me. One of the primary purposes of *Foundations* is to get pastors doing theology by providing them with an outlet for publication. Second, *Foundations* needs more subscribers and generally to be better known. Tell people about it. Give your pastor a subscription for his birthday (you won't get one for better value at the price). Why not get your church to give subscriptions to all her missionaries? The more readers we have the greater good we can do. Third, pray for me and the others involved in this work.

It has been an encouragement to begin working with the new editorial board whose names you will find inside the front cover but I am very conscious of my shortcomings as editor. I need great wisdom, discernment and sound judgement. The times in which we live are very exciting, but also very confusing ones to live in theologically. With limited resources we need to strike the right note and not make too many mistakes. Without the assistance of the Holy Spirit the work is in vain. So, in your prayers for

the BEC and the wider church, remember *Foundations*, that the Lord will use this journal for the good of his kingdom in our land and beyond.

I have been reading a book recently that has stimulated my thinking in the light of my new responsibilities. It is the two volume work *Princeton Seminary* by David Calhoun (Banner of Truth, 1994). This is far more than an institutional history; it is an account of a great work of God, of a group of remarkable men, of a sound and vigorous theology and of a spirituality that we know too little of today. Chris Bennett takes up one aspect in his article on page 3. I highly recommend them to anyone who wants a stimulating and heart-warming read. Personally I could not put them down. But the thing that struck me about the first one, is the way the old Princeton theologians sought to keep together sound learning and vital piety. Many of us know of Princeton because of the theological giants it produced – Archibald Alexander, Charles Hodge, AA Hodge, BB Warfield, and Gresham Machen among others. What is forgotten is the vital Calvinistic evangelical piety that went with it. The early leaders, especially Alexander, knew revival in the older Edwardsian sense of the word. For them theology was not a matter of cold abstractions, but of life-changing, culture-changing truths. These men knew both the Scriptures and the power of God. Sadly, even orthodox Princeton seemed to let go the close connection between sound learning and vital piety and I believe that this had a detrimental effect on American evangelicalism in the 20th century.

Today sound learning and vital piety are not two things we tend to associate together. With few exceptions our colleges are not producing and our pulpits are not filled with learned men of God. Some have great learning, but where is the power, the fire, the life? Others have commendable zeal and enthusiasm, but the teaching is superficial and leaves the sheep hungry. Where are the men, university taught or self-taught, like Calvin, or Edwards, or Carey, or Chalmers, or Spurgeon? Where are the men like those Baptist pastors who “held the rope” for William Carey – John Sutcliff, Andrew Fuller, John Ryland, Samuel Pearce? These were men who were busy pastors and aggressive evangelists who were also first-rate theologians. Frankly today there are not many men like these. We have the strange situation in which we have more learned books than ever (can any generation have had as many good commentaries as we have?) and a great deal of activity and spiritual excitement and yet our churches are weak and our impact limited. Do we not need to recover what the older divines called “vital godliness”? Theology must never be an end in itself; it must always serve the church as it has always done at its best. Calvin wrote his *Institutes* to promote the Christian life. Augustine, Owen and Edwards did their theology for the same reason, as do our contemporaries such as Packer, Ferguson, Carson, Piper, Grudem and Boice. Sadly all these men are working mainly in North America. I hope that *Foundations* can help to nurture some theologians in Britain who will strive to keep sound learning and vital piety in tandem.

What of future issues? In the autumn we are planning an issue devoted mainly to the theme of “Word and Spirit”. It seems to me that this is a much misunderstood subject today and requires some theological exploration. Then next spring we are planning an issue on the theological skills required by ordinary pastors for doing their job. There will also be reviews on new books and other items of interest.