

# REFORMATION TODAY



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**Websites** [www.reformation-today.org](http://www.reformation-today.org)

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

<http://africanpastorsconference.com>



*Pastor Paul N'Goran of the Ivory Coast and Jean-Claude Souillot of France. For a description of the work of Europresse see News, page 17.*



*This group photo was taken at the eighth FIEL conference in Portugal (see page 16).*

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*Front cover picture – Sao Paulo is a city of 17.7 million people. The photo shows the office buildings alongside the Pinheiros River*

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## Editorial

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One of the speakers at the recent Desiring God Pastors' Conference in Minneapolis, Dr Michael Oh of Christ Bible Seminary in Japan, challenged each pastor to prayerfully and seriously consider giving five years of their career to global missions. If a pastor's ministry were fifty years, a tithe would be five years. This would greatly assist in the fulfilment of the Great Commission and be a wonderful example to the church.

Pastors are needed worldwide in all aspects of evangelism and discipleship, and especially that of church leadership development.

There are an estimated 3.2 million untrained and undertrained pastors throughout the world; for example, in the Philippines, there are an estimated 40,000 needy pastors. These pastors need encouragement, training, mentoring, books, study Bibles, and assistance in all aspects of living for God and serving him in dangerous, hectic, and extremely poor situations.

Doug Nichols is ACTION Facilitator of Pastoral Leadership Development Worldwide. He writes with this exhortation: Please prayerfully consider serving with needy pastors in ACTION's Pastoral Leadership Development ministry in Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America for four to six years, or even for one month yearly in ministry.

If you are interested, please go to our website: [www.EquipPastors.org](http://www.EquipPastors.org) to learn more of ACTION and its Pastoral Leadership Development ministry and where you could serve.

One response to the call for a missionary personal service tithe from pastors came from one who suggested that it might be better if instead of the time spent in travelling abroad the pastors at home trained young people to prepare to be full-time missionaries who will spend their whole lives on the mission fields as that will be more effective.

Surely it is not one option versus the other but rather both should be in place. Every pastor should encourage the calling of missionaries out of his own church as well as offer himself to assisting missions abroad. Over a period of forty years my average is about eight weeks serving abroad every year. That was only possible because I was supported in missionary vision by fellow church officers and church members. Often the principal barrier to a pastor's

servicing in short term missions abroad is the lack of vision and the unwillingness of church officers and members to share their pastor.

There are further factors. We cannot presume that because we are effective at home we will automatically be effective in other countries. We have to labour assiduously in study to meet the needs of our congregations and the same kind of hard work is involved in preaching abroad. We have to study the needs represented in missionary situations. It is not a matter of merely repeating the sermonic materials we have used at home. An example of this is Alan Levy who has just returned from another month of conference work in Sierra Leone. For a pastors' conference he opened up Paul's letter to the Romans. Some asked the question, What is a Jew and what is a Gentile? The challenge is to prepare materials which meet very basic needs of pastors whose educational privileges are minimal compared to ours and access to books is way below what we are accustomed to. It is possible to go abroad and minister in a way which soars above the heads of the hearers so they simply do not know what we are talking about. In short missionary work is specialised work and requires the same diligent preparation as is required at home.

Another factor is that of health. Some I know seem to have constitutions of iron and have never experienced sickness in hostile countries whereas others have experienced serious illness and been so discouraged thereby that they have given up the idea of short term missions abroad. That is exceptional but it is an important factor. Furthermore we cannot presume that we will automatically be comfortable in our relationships with those of another culture. As the factor of calling is involved in a local church so there is the matter of calling in short term missions abroad. Prayerful and humble preparation is essential.

My observation is that the way to the most effective ministry abroad is to concentrate on one country and return year by year. For many years now Pastor Stephen Turner of New Zealand has devoted a month every year to teaching pastors in Sri Lanka and India. Matthew Else of the Isle of Man did the same in visiting the same area of India annually. The remarkable outcome was described in RT 225. The review by Tom Wells of the book *The Missionary Call* is relevant.

*Reformation Today issue 230*

The articles ready to appear in RT 230 are *My Experience of Revival* by Jay Baker, *The Huguenots – a summary*, and *What happened to the Huguenots?* by Frederick Hodgson and *The Gospel in China*.

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# The Priceless Gift of the Lord's Day

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*10 reasons why we need to celebrate the Lord's Day*

*By Jonathan Holdt*

One of the precious jewels of God's wisdom has to do with how we use our time. In his wisdom God has set apart one day in seven whereby we deliberately set aside our usual pursuits and come together in worship.

The benefits of honouring the Lord's Day are immense! Yet many compromise and neglect the Lord's Day, with tragic consequences: spiritual decay, lukewarmness toward Christ and his people, and neglect of the spiritual gifts in the body of believers. We need to appreciate why we should keep the Lord's Day special so as to become true followers of Jesus Christ. Here are ten reasons why we need to value and treasure the Lord's Day.

*Reason 1: Keeping the Lord's Day special is a moral duty for all mankind*

After God had created the world in six days he rested on the seventh day. 'Why?' you might ask. 'God does not grow weary.' The reason is quite simply to give to man a pattern for his life – working six days and resting on the seventh. Like marriage the Sabbath is a creational ordinance. 'Sabbath' means 'a ceasing' from work. 'God blessed the seventh day and made it holy' (Gen 2:3). To make holy means to set apart. He thus made this day different from the other days, to be used for the benefit of all mankind, not only the Jews. This example in creation was not designed for a specific period, but endures from age to age together with the human race.

The Sabbath is so vital that it is incorporated as the fourth of the Ten Commandments (Ex 20).<sup>1</sup> In Exodus the reason given is creation. In Deuteronomy the reason given is redemption out of Egypt. As slaves in Egypt they were not free to keep a day apart for rest, but now they were liberated. Just so Christians have been redeemed and liberated and are called to celebrate that freedom in Christ on the Lord's Day. Hence the day is described as the 'lordly day' (*tē kuriakē hēmera*) (Rev 1:10). 'Lordly' is an adjective descriptive of our Lord's jurisdiction over this day.

That this command is included with the other nine moral commandments highlights the moral obligation we have in keeping it. Jewish ceremonial rules and penalties no longer apply to New Covenant believers. Nevertheless the

essence of this moral law has not changed, and needs to be heeded today. While the New Testament does not specify what we may and may not do on this special day of rest, the moral obligation remains in place for us to set apart one day for special worship, reflection and ministry to the Lord.

*Reason 2: Keeping the Lord's Day special is a sign of your faith in Christ and love for him*

Jesus said, 'If you love me, you will keep my commandments' (John 14:15). Some argue that keeping the Lord's Day special is not part of New Testament teaching. However, Jesus reiterated the importance of this command for all mankind: 'The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath' (Mark 2:27). In that context he was contending with the Pharisees, whose innumerable man-made rules had turned the Sabbath into a burden and not a blessing. Jesus, however, asserts his authority and lordship over this special day of rest for all mankind. By faithfully attending corporate worship, we demonstrate our faith and love for Christ in submitting to his lordship over our lives and our time.

*Reason 3: Keeping the Lord's Day special is a powerful witness to the watching world*

Jesus said, 'You are the light of the world' (Matt 5:14), teaching us the importance of being a witness in this fallen world. In keeping the Lord's Day special we witness to our love for Christ, for his Word and for his people. If a musician attracts but a handful of people to his performances you might think he is not worth listening to. But if great crowds flock to hear him, you might be drawn to go and listen for yourself. By joining in corporate worship we give a clear message to the world that we believe in the gospel. If we invite visitors or guests on the Lord's Day to join us that could be life-changing for them.

*Reason 4: Keeping the Lord's Day special is of great encouragement to other believers*

'Let us consider how to stir up one another ... not neglecting to meet together, ... but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near' (Heb 10:25). Before us lies the Day of the Lord, when he will return to judge the world. In anticipation of the Lord's imminent return we gather on the Lord's Day to encourage one another.

How uplifting when God's people leave the house of the Lord built up in their faith and challenged to live the godly life as they await the appearance of Christ in glory. In contrast, how discouraging to see many church members absent because their other plans are deemed more important than corporate

worship. A sports team will not be motivated and do well on the field if players cannot be relied upon to practise. In the church we are dealing with eternal issues and we cannot afford to be absent for frivolous reasons. When Christians make a determined effort to be present in the house of the Lord when the Word is being preached, their presence encourages fellow Christians and their pastor.

*Reason 5: Keeping the Lord's Day special will result in greater worship of the Triune God, in which he and the church are uniquely blessed*

The worship of our Triune God is our primary focus in the Lord's Day services. It is God the Father we honour on this day. It is his Son, Jesus Christ our risen Lord and Saviour, we worship and adore on this day. It is through the Holy Spirit that we are filled with joy as we celebrate the blessings and grace the Lord's Day brings to every believing heart.

As members of the universal body of Christ, we all gather round the throne of grace on the Lord's Day. This is reflected in Malachi 1:11 which reads, 'From the rising of the sun to its setting my name will be great among the nations, and in every place incense will be offered to my name, and a pure offering. For my name will be great among the nations, says the LORD of hosts.' What joy to know that when we gather for worship on the Lord's Day we are part of the greater universal Church, meeting to glorify Christ's name and minister to one another in love. God is praised and we are blessed.

This love for one another furthermore evidences itself in hospitality to visitors, to students, to those from abroad, and to those whose lives may be lonely. How pleased Christ must be when he sees this happening within his Church! How blessed the church where the members faithfully keep the Lord's Day special and include in it the valuable ministry of hospitality.

*Reason 6: Keeping the Lord's Day special will result in many spiritual and physical benefits*

The Word of God is the primary means of grace and spiritual growth in our lives. In every sermon that is carefully and prayerfully prepared, you can be assured that God has a word for you specifically, which is designed for your wellbeing.

It is a great error to imagine that because we are strong in doctrine and know the central truths we do not need to sit under the ministry of the Word on the Lord's Day. Those who neglect it are vulnerable to the false doctrines of the cults. Paul is adamant that all believers need to be built up in their faith: 'And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers,

to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ' (Eph 4:11-15). The Lord's Day is the unrivalled time for this building up, since that is the day when the means of grace are in full supply. Christians who value the Lord's Day grow spiritually stronger and stand firm against false doctrine and deception.

Besides spiritual benefits tremendous physical benefits are wrapped up as a gift from the Lord on his special day. God has designed us so that we need to sleep at night as well as take a total break from our normal work routine one in seven days. Resting from normal commitments on one day a week releases much stress and recharges the body. How sad if we neglect the precious gift of the Lord's Day.

Have you ever seen an item advertised with the words, 'Unwanted Gift'? When we fail to keep the Lord's Day special we are advertising to heaven that it is an unwanted gift and that we prefer to do things our way and not God's. We will suffer as a result. But when we keep the Lord's Day special, we show our appreciation for this wonderful gift. God is glorified and we reap the benefits that he has in store for us in honouring him on the Lord's Day!

*Reason 7: Keeping the Lord's Day special is of great influence in the salvation of children*

The Bible's 400-plus references to children show us how important they are in God's eyes. He expects children to be taught the Word by believing parents. 'These words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children' (Deut 6:6-7). Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven' (Matt 19:14). God desires parents to point their children to Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. Besides family worship in the home, they do this by setting a faithful example on the Lord's Day: when it comes to choosing between a school sports event and going to church to worship God, God comes first.

My parents impressed upon us as children the importance of keeping the Sabbath holy. This left a strong impression upon me. Even in my rebellious years, when away from home I attended services in a local church. Although unconverted, I listened to the Word of God and in due course was saved when I repented and trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ. I am completely persuaded that

the teaching that the Lord's Day is to be honoured was vital in preserving my soul from eternal destruction and ruin.

*Reason 8: Keeping the Lord's Day special magnifies the saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ*

Why do Christians celebrate the Sabbath day on Sunday and not Saturday like the Jews? Because Jesus has fulfilled the strict requirements of the law. The Jewish celebrations and Sabbaths have been fulfilled in Christ (Col 2:16-17). He is the essence and substance of Old Covenant worship. Now that he has come and offered up his life as a sacrifice, the Old Covenant has been done away with ('made obsolete', Heb 8:13) and a New Covenant has been inaugurated. Christians are no longer required to worship on the Jewish Sabbath – Saturday – or subscribe to its exacting restrictions.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, we need to remember that the Sabbath day of rest is a creational ordinance and not peculiar to the law given to Moses.

The early Church specifically chose the first day of the week to worship the Lord Jesus (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor 16:2). Without doubt it was to celebrate the victory of the Lord Jesus Christ over death. It was a day for the corporate celebration of the saving work of Christ through his resurrection from the dead. It is significant that Christ appeared to his disciples in his resurrected body a number of times on the first day of the week. The Holy Spirit was poured out upon the Church on the first day of the week as they met for worship. On that day the apostle Peter preached the message that was used for the conversion of 3000 people (Acts 2:1-41). Thus the Sabbath day for a Christian is now the first day of the week, which magnifies the saving work of our Lord Jesus Christ. We go to worship the Lord Jesus with joy and gladness of heart on his Day, the first day of the week. In this way we sound out the victory he has achieved over Satan, sin and death itself.

*Reason 9: Keeping the Lord's Day special is fundamental in spurring us on toward heavenly glory*

The book of Hebrews was written to encourage Christians to persevere in their faith despite trials and suffering. The writer reminds us that though the people of Israel had entered the Promised Land, the rest God spoke about was yet to come. 'For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on. So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God ... Let us therefore strive to enter that rest' (Heb 4:8-9, 11).

Some argue that he is talking about the rest we receive in Jesus Christ when we cease to trust in our own efforts for salvation. That is only partly true. The salvation that Christ has purchased includes the grace we need to persevere in our faith until we reach eternal glory. And how we need this grace of God at

every moment! We still have to strive against sin and unbelief which harass our souls day by day. We need to become more like Christ. We press on through faith, eagerly looking forward to the eternal glory and rest to come: a rest from the struggle against sin, from the temptations of Satan, and from opposition in this unbelieving world.

The Sabbath day is meant to be a foretaste of heavenly glory and eternal rest. It is a reminder to us of the need to persevere until we enter that rest. The Word of God preached on the Lord's Day is a vital means of grace needed to spur us on in our faith. Knowing this can we afford to say that the Lord's Day is like every other day? No! We stand to lose much in doing so. We hold fast to the belief that the Lord's Day is the Christian Sabbath and fundamental in spurring us on toward heavenly glory and rest.

*Reason 10: Keeping the Lord's Day special receives God's special blessing*

In keeping the Lord's Day special we gain the reward God has promised to those who honour him in this way. When God makes a promise he keeps it. This is his promise: 'If you turn back your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight and the holy day of the LORD honourable; if you honour it, not going your own ways, or seeking your own pleasure or talking idly; then you shall take delight in the Lord, and I will make you ride on the heights of the earth; I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken' (Isa 58:13).

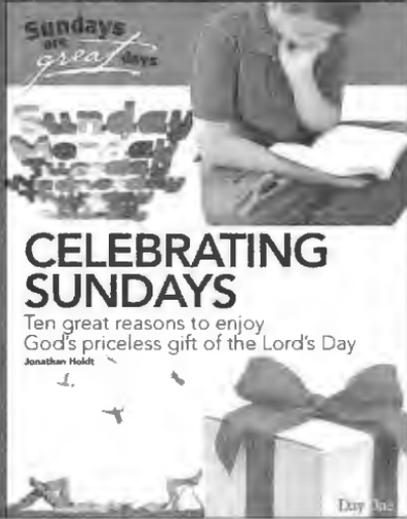
If God's people delight in him on the Sabbath, take their minds off themselves, their business pursuits, their pleasures, and make this day holy, using the time to worship God and to build one another up through godly conversation, then he will prosper them. They will be spiritually revived. They will be lifted up with renewed strength and vigour. They will enjoy God and find greater delight in him.

The life of the athlete, Eric Liddell, illustrates how God honours this promise.<sup>3</sup> Participating in the 1924 Olympics in Paris, Liddell, as a committed Christian, refused to race on Sunday, and instead attended church. Consequently he was forced to withdraw from the 100-metre race, his best event. Later in the week he ran in the 200-metre and managed to win the bronze medal. He also qualified for the 400-metre final to be run on the Friday. On that morning Eric received a note from a team masseur with the text, 'Those who honour me I will honour' (I Sam 2:30), referring to his decision not to run on Sunday. It made a deep impression on him and he was encouraged. When the starter's pistol cracked he set off at optimum speed, which seemed to some to be the height of folly. However Liddell kept up the pace and not only won the race but broke the existing world record with a time of 47.6 seconds. Horatio Fitch,



'Eric Liddell received a note from a team masseur in which was written the text from 1 Samuel 2:30:

“Those who honour me, I will honour.””



*DAYONE publishers have produced a high production quality booklet in colour with the title CELEBRATING SUNDAYS by Jonathan Holdt. The text material is twice the length of this article. It is sold in packs of 5 (for £10, therefore £2 each). If larger quantities are required please contact DAYONE Ryelands Road, Leominster, HR6 8NZ*

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the world record holder until then, had struggled in vain to catch up with him, and testified: 'I could not believe a man could set such a pace and finish ... He had sprinted the entire race, an unusual feat because most coaches believed then that a runner could not sprint 400 yards. Liddell did not weaken.'

God is true to his promise. It requires faith on the believer's part to obey. Sometimes you may think, 'I cannot afford not to work on a Sunday. I have so much to do.' But faith trusts God to provide wisdom and strength to use the six days he has given to meet our commitments. Faith puts God, Christ and his

Word above all else on the Lord's Day, a day given for our benefit and for God's glory.

But does this mean I can't watch TV, kick a football around on the lawn, travel, or buy a newspaper on a Sunday? We must be careful not to replace the pleasure and joy of keeping this day holy with legalistic rules that God has never given us. That is where the Pharisees went wrong. Rather we ought to approach the Lord's Day with a sense of delight by asking not, 'What can't I do?' but rather 'What can I do for God's glory on this special day?'

There is so much we can do on the Lord's Day to make it special. Whatever we do though, the principle that the Lord's Day is special and set aside for our good cannot change. It was given to us by God when he created the world – that his people, those who would put their faith and trust in him, might become spiritually healthy, holy, and effective as witnesses for him. It is a priceless gift which we must value highly and cherish with grateful and thankful hearts.

*What will your response be to the priceless gift of the Lord's Day?*

Will you thank the Lord for the precious gift of the Lord's Day? Will you commit yourself to making this day special for yourself and for your family members? Barring ill-health, will you commit yourself to making every effort to be among fellow believers in corporate worship services on the Lord's Day? Will you seek to use your gifts and abilities among fellow believers on the Lord's Day? Will you commit yourself to practising hospitality, to fellowshiping with and encouraging fellow believers on the Lord's Day? Will you commit to praying for the universal church on the Lord's Day? Will you call the Lord's Day a delight to your soul and seek to guard it from worldly intrusions that seek to rob you of the joy and blessing to be received by keeping this day special?

If you humble yourself before the Lord, thank and praise him for his special day and resolve to be committed in honouring him on it to the best of your ability, you can be sure of this: you will be honoured in God's eyes. The Lord has promised, 'Those who honour me, I will honour.'

May God be pleased to revive our hearts as believers that we might indeed call the Lord's Day a delight to our souls.

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<sup>1</sup> There are two records of the Ten Commandments in Scripture, Exodus chapter 20 and Deuteronomy chapter 5.

<sup>2</sup> For a comprehensive exposition of this change from the Jewish Sabbath to the Lord's Day see Joseph A Pipa, *The Lord's Day*, Christian Focus Publications, 1997, 244 pages, pp. 95-129.

<sup>3</sup> See John W Keddie, *Running the Race*, Evangelical Press, 2008, 256 pages, pp.116-132.

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## Full-time elders/pastors?

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*By Kees van Kralingen*

New churches are multiplying rapidly all over the world especially in Latin America, Africa and Asia. In many areas there is a chronic shortage of theologically trained full-time pastors to teach and provide pastoral care. The lack of education is illustrated by one elderly pastor at an African pastors' conference who bought a book and said that he could not read it but his children would read it to him and explain it to him in Zulu.<sup>1</sup> As churches grow the question arises, What about a full-time elder or pastor to lead teach and counsel? And the very next question is, Who is going to pay the salary of the full-time pastor? Unlike the angels who need neither food nor clothing the pastor and his family must be provided for. This article aims to examine the biblical information on this subject.

### *Leadership*

The New Testament addresses the subject of leadership in the churches. Two Greek words are used to describe the idea of leaders or leadership. The word *hegemounos* is used in Acts 15:22 and Hebrews 13:7,17,24 and is usually translated by the word 'leader'. It conveys the idea of someone taking the lead and acting as a guide.<sup>2</sup> The word is used in a rather general sense, not referring to specific functions. The way the word is used in Hebrews 13 shows that the church is made up of leaders and those who follow them. The church members are exhorted to obey their leaders (Heb 13:17).

The word *proïstamenos* is used in Romans 12:8 and 1 Thessalonians 5:12. It literally means standing in front of in the sense of providing leadership or guiding. The word also conveys the thought of caring for someone with love. The same word also occurs in 1 Timothy 3:5,12 where it is applied to the need for an elder or deacon as a father to guide and care for his family. The focus of this word is on providing pastoral care and leadership.<sup>4</sup> The word occurs in Romans 12:8 as one of the gifts which God gives graciously to the church which needs to be exercised with love.

## *Elder(s)*

Two other terms in the NT give more detailed information on the function of the leaders in the church. The first word is *presbuteros*. This word literally means 'elder' in the sense of the eldest person in terms of age as in Acts 2:17 and 1 Timothy 5:1,2. Secondly, it can also refer to the forefathers, those who have already passed away, as in Hebrews 11:2. Also the word means the elder as the one who has been put in charge to lead a community, or more specifically, the church as the community of believers. This last meaning is obviously the most relevant to our subject. In this sense the word occurs in many instances in the New Testament. In the Gospels it refers to the Jewish leaders: the scribes, the Pharisees, the leaders of a synagogue, etc. The word also occurs many times in the book of Revelation in the visions where elders are seen. In Acts and in the Epistles the word refers to people in the churches (Acts 11:30; 14:23; 15:2,4,6,22,23; 16:4; 20:17; 21:18; 1 Tim. 4:14; 5:17; Titus 1:5; James 5:14; 1 Peter 5:1,5). The word often refers to leaders in the local church as in Titus 1:5 and James 5:14. The apostles Peter and John also refer to themselves as elder in 1 Peter 5:1, 2 John 1 and 3 John 1, although they had a function beyond a local church.

In the case of Acts 15 and 16:4 we see that the elders are mentioned together with apostles as fulfilling a leadership and teaching role. James, the brother of the Lord Jesus, addresses the church meeting as elder. The address of Paul to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20 shows what significance and responsibility he attached to them. Peter addresses the elders in his first letter in a similar way. The fact that he tells them to serve willingly may indicate that their task was formally instituted in the church. His other admonitions refer to misuse of power and abuse of money. This indicates that the elders exercised authority in the church and were probably also in charge of the funds of the community. The elders are subject to the authority of the Chief Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul's use in 1 Timothy 4:14 indicates that the elders in the church act together as a group in the ordination of Timothy by the laying on of hands. Titus was to appoint elders in every town (Titus 1:5). This shows that the church in a town is seen as the local church which fits in with other occasions where the New Testament speaks about the church in Jerusalem, Antioch, Ephesus etc. The occurrence of the word elders in the plural indicates that there was a plurality of elders in a local church. In some cases we read that the local church in a town meets as a whole (e.g. as in Acts 15) even though for practical reasons

the church will also have met in smaller groups in the houses of church members. This supports the occurrence of multiple elders in the local church.

### *Overseers*

The second word used in the New Testament is *episkopos*. It does not occur as often as the word *presbuteros* and is found in Acts 20:28, Philippians 1:1, 1 Timothy 3:1,2, Titus 1:7 and 1 Peter 2:25. It means someone who ‘oversees’. The word is applied by Peter to the Lord Jesus Christ and is combined with the word ‘shepherd’: ‘You have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.’ The word illustrates another important aspect of the function of these people: to oversee and to shepherd the flock, the church. This is especially clear in the admonition of Paul to the overseers of the church in Ephesus (Acts 20): ‘Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God...’ We also find the idea of being shepherds in 1 Peter 5:1,2.

As compared to the word *presbuteros*/elder, the word *episkopos*/overseer indicates more the function of these people. The 1 Timothy and Titus passages show the qualifications required to be an overseer.

In the history of the church, the word *episkopos* has been given a hierarchical meaning involving the charge over other elders and charge over several churches. This was based on the observation that the word *episkopos* in the letters to Timothy and Titus occurs in the singular whereas the word *presbuteros* is often used in the plural. It is difficult to accept this meaning because the two words *episkopos* and *presbuteros* are used interchangeably as we see in Acts 20:17 and 20:28 and also in Titus 1:5 and 1:7. We have to conclude that elders and overseers refer to the same office. The two words indicate different aspects of the role and function of the same office.

### *Specific tasks: preaching and teaching*

Closer examination indicates that some elders concentrated on specific tasks. Paul mentions elders whose work is preaching and teaching (1 Tim 5:17). He describes elders working hard in the Word and in teaching. Paul also mentions teachers in Ephesians 4:11 as part of the gifts of the Lord Jesus to the Church (see also Acts 13:1 and 1 Cor 12:28,29). The word teacher is linked strongly to shepherd in this text and elsewhere (Acts 20, see above). We can conclude that the preaching and teaching of the Word is a key element of leading and

shepherding the flock. The elders will also have to give account of how they discharge their duty (Heb 13:17; 1 Peter 5:3). There is nothing to show that teaching elders occupy a higher hierarchical position than other elders. Paul emphasises the importance of the task of preaching by telling the Romans that preachers need to be sent (Rom 10:15). All preachers should clearly know themselves to be called to this task. At the same time all elders should regard themselves primarily as servants (1 Peter 5:2,3). They are under-shepherds under the chief Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ. Thinking about the office of an elder in human terms of status is alien to the New Testament.

*What about paid, full-time (or part-time) elders?*

The Bible clearly speaks on this subject which is also addressed in the Confession.<sup>4</sup> The main points can be summarised as follows. It begins with Deuteronomy 25:4 where the Israelites are told: 'Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain.' The animal should be fed properly. This is a principle which is also used by the Lord Jesus Christ himself in his address to the disciples when they are sent out (Matt 10:10). Similar words are found in Luke 10:7 when Jesus sends out the 72 workers. Paul spends a longer section on this topic in his first letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor 9:6-14). He uses examples from society, the arrangements for the service in the temple in the Old Testament and the above text from Deuteronomy. He finally mentions a clear commandment of the Lord Jesus probably referring to the texts in Matthew 10:10 and Luke 10:7.

Paul repeats the same principle also in his pastoral letters to Timothy (1 Tim 5:17,18; 2 Tim 2:3-7). The first of these texts says: 'The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honour, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, "Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain," and "The worker deserves his wages."' The explanation in verse 18 shows what Paul meant by the words double honour, namely, remuneration or salary.

We observe from the book of Acts that this principle was followed. We read in Acts 18:3,4 about Paul in Corinth making tents during the week and teaching on Sabbath days. However, when Silas and Timothy arrive, Paul devotes himself exclusively to preaching. Earning some money by making tents was probably a necessity, but as soon as he could avoid this, he devoted all his time to preaching. This may also explain the teaching about this subject in his first letter to the Corinthians. Paul also mentions in his second letter to the

Corinthians that he was no burden to the local church, but that instead he received support from the churches in Macedonia (2 Cor 11:9; see also Phil 4:10-19).

### *Conclusions*

Elders are God's gift to the church for providing leadership in the local church. In each church there can be several elders some of whom take on the task of preaching and teaching which is a vitally important part of 'shepherding the flock'. The elders who work full-time in this ministry deserve to receive appropriate payment for their service to the church. This equally applies when someone serves on a part-time basis. In Acts we read of the appointment of seven deacons in order to enable the apostles to give themselves to 'prayer and the ministry of the word' (Acts 6:4).

The link between preaching/teaching and pastoral care for the church obviously leads to the concept of a pastor-elder who combines these tasks. This is often the case in small churches for practical reasons. In a larger church, however, there may be more than one elder involved in full-time or part-time service. In that case the tasks may be shared. One or more elders may devote themselves especially or entirely to preaching and teaching whereas others may focus on specific spheres of pastoral care work (e.g. youth work). The same principles explained above regarding payment apply to all these categories.

Systematic biblical preaching and teaching is such an important task within the church that it ideally demands a full-time person. This ministry is foundational to all other forms of ministry in the church as we can see from the emphasis on this task in the New Testament.

It is important to state these principles in the constitution of the Church. The local church should also make appropriate arrangements for how to elect and call full-time paid elders for preaching and teaching.

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<sup>1</sup> Illustration kindly provided by Erroll Hulse.

<sup>2</sup> Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. II, p.907.

<sup>3</sup> Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. VI, p.700.

<sup>4</sup> A Faith to Confess. The Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689 (Leeds: Carey Publications, 1975) chapter 26, paragraph 10, p.57.

## Brazil



*Rick Denham and his wife Rees and family*

Upon the retirement of Richard Denham this year his son Rick Denham has taken the leadership role of *Editora FIEL* in Brazil (see RT 191).

It was 57 years ago that Richard and Pearl Denham sold all and left the USA to become pioneer missionaries in the Amazon. When Richard and Pearl embraced the doctrines of grace they came to grips with the fact that methods did not make Christians. They became increasingly aware that the greatest need of the Brazilian churches is reformed theology. The Church in Brazil has grown numerically. Inflated claims are often made in Brazil for the large percentage of evangelicals in a population of about 190 million. The problem is that church growth methods are employed which do not result in a regenerate membership.

Richard organised an annual conference for pastors, which has grown over the years and is now

attended by about 1,500. Editora FIEL (FIEL means faithful) is a publishing house with a large number of books in Portuguese. PES is another reformed publishing house in São Paulo which is led by Bill Barkley.

A gift service of a book a month to pastors has been widely used in Brazil and in Mozambique. FIEL host an annual conference in Nampula which in 2008 saw 235 in attendance (see RT 226). The book-a-month programme is also operative in Portugal and Angola. In Mozambique there are 175 involved in this programme. FIEL has hosted a conference for pastors in Portugal for eight years and there are plans to serve pastors in Cabo Verde and Guinea Bissau, Africa, where Portuguese is the predominant language.

### *The work of PES*

Bill and Mary left the UK and arrived in Brazil in 1958. They spent the first sixteen years in Amazonas and the last seven of that directing a Christian bookstore in Manaus. They began publishing in 1977 under the title PES. (PES – Publicações Evangélicas Seleccionadas, which means Select Evangelical Publications). Now in 2009 an amazing 190 titles are in print 190, 29 in hardback making 219 items in all. A number of the books are by Martyn Lloyd-Jones. A glance at the website will show that most of the well known reformed authors are represented.



*Bill and Mary Barkley*

The work at present undergoing translation is the 1,000 page *Meet the Puritans* by Joel Beeke and Randall Pederson. As in English so in Portuguese the word Puritan is battered in a number of ways so Bill has decided to entitle this wonderful book *Passion for Purity* with 'Meet the Puritans' as a subtitle. Talking about battering the Puritans one silly slur is that the Puritans hated football. In present-day England to hate football is the very worst form of heresy. In fact it would be very difficult to find any reference to football in Puritan writings let alone document a negative attitude to sport unless it was deemed harmful to the Lord's Day.

The PES books are excellent ambassadors for the truth. Through the years young seminarians, pastors and church members have come to appreciate what has been published. These books are also fulfilling a wonderful ministry in Mozambique and Portugal.

## France

Europresse has a missionary work led by Jean-Claude Souillot. French is the language of 200 million people many of whom live in West Africa. There are 23 African countries in which French is the principal language. Europresse currently has 150 books and booklets in print.

Pastor Paul N'Goran of the Ivory Coast sustains a radio ministry for Europresse. Twenty radio stations in different parts of Africa broadcast 15 minute Bible studies which fly under the title 'Echos de la Vérité'. Listeners are invited to receive a cassette with six programs.

Europresse also provides a preachers' training course by correspondence from which several hundred pastors have benefited. A further ministry is the organisation of Grace conferences. During 2008 Jean-Claude ministered at Grace conferences in Ivory Coast, Togo and Cameroon. He has just returned from a Grace conference in Benin and reports that about 40 men were present from five countries. The main sessions this year were devoted to 'the five pillars of free grace' and many participants commented on the help this would be to them in their ministries. We also visited several churches in Benin and Togo where we were able to preach the gospel.

Benin in particular seems blessed at the present time ('blessed' in French is 'Béni', very close to the word 'Benin'!). A young man from Paul N'Goran's church in Ivory Coast came with us and proved himself to be a powerful

preacher. It is encouraging to see the next generation getting into harness.

## **Zambia**

When the Reformed Baptist movement began in Zambia in the late 1980s, the scarecrow used against it was that the churches would shrink because that was the effect of the movement in other parts of the world. 'Your churches will die!' our members were constantly warned. Those of us who were pioneering this movement put on our thinking caps and found that this was going to happen if we did not run the evangelistic machinery in our churches at white-hot heat. This we did, and the effect is that a number of our churches are experiencing seating space problems. Kabwata Baptist Church has recently had to demolish a few walls to accommodate its ever-growing Sunday attendance. Apart from that our conferences and camps are now full to overflowing. For instance, our recent KBC youth camp had well over four hundred young people, mostly teenagers, in attendance. And the advertised theme was not 'How to be successful in life' but 'The Final Judgement!' We as Reformed Baptists are also the only Baptists in Zambia running regular television and radio programs and we are the only Baptists in Zambia with church websites that are active. Lusaka alone now has no less than ten Reformed Baptist churches.  
*Conrad Mbewe.*

## **Cape Verde Islands**

*News from Sebastian & Karen Floor.  
Sebastian tutors Bible translators.*

A recent highlight for me was work with 26 translators from across Portuguese-speaking Africa. This represents a new generation of dedicated, educated translators, keen to prepare the best possible translation for their own peoples. December was set aside for a family holiday in the Cape. January saw us moving into our house, and right away beginning to prepare for the translation checking of the book of Acts in Kabuverdianu, the language of Cape Verde. We are still working with the group in Mozambique. This means we live in Johannesburg and travel in and out of Mozambique.

On February 2nd I travelled via Dakar to Praia, the capital of the Cape Verdian island archipelago in the middle of the Atlantic, off the coast of Senegal. Cape Verde gained independence from Portugal in 1975, and consists of ten dry desert islands with about half a million inhabitants. South African air travellers will remember 'Ilha do Sal', one of the islands which served as a stop-over on the way to Europe or the USA. The islands were first discovered by Portugal in 1460 and in 1462 became the first European settlement in the tropics, 30 years before Columbus. While there I worked with the translation team to check the book of Acts. During 10 days a group of volunteers answered my many questions about the translation, and together we were able to improve an already very good translation to an even better one.

Five years ago we did the same for the Gospel of Luke. The publication of Luke in that language is a wonderful

success story. Now, five years later, it is the best-selling book in Cape Verde. It is also available on the internet, where people can read and even listen to any section of Luke they want to. The publication won a literacy award from the Cape Verdian Writers' Association, and has been widely distributed in the Capeverdian Diaspora, the many communities of Capeverdians in Europe and North America. It is therefore no surprise that there was huge interest in the book of Acts. Translators, reviewers and sympathisers of the project all came to attend the checking sessions, savouring some of the renderings in their own heart language, and making suggestions to improve the work. This type of collaborative translation is something very special. Public interest is high and many people are involved in the translation.

## **Israel**

*This report from Pastor Tony Simons of Jerusalem*

We continue every Friday to give God's Word out to the foreign workers in Tel Aviv. This work is going well. We give out Bibles and also a hot meal to those in need. Some refugees are Christians who have fled persecution in their home countries simply for being Christian. Here they live in uncertainty because few countries are willing to take them in. They take comfort in small things. Few of us in the West know what it is like to live like this, yet when you look at the world it is evident that large numbers live with uncertainty, the threat of violence, war and strife.

We have a group of four or five people every week who come and help us to give out the Bibles and to distribute the food. We are so blessed to be able to serve the Lord in this way. Many churches can do the same because not too far away there will be very needy people.

One of our main challenges with regard to the refugees is to give them the Scriptures in their own language. They are so happy to receive the Word of God in their own language. We recently received nearly 1000 Bibles in Amharic and 800 in Tigrinyian (an Eritrean dialect). We have been contacted by an Eritrean church that meets in Tel Aviv (all refugees) asking for help in teaching and outreach. Eritrea is a Communist country and the believers there have been brutally persecuted for a long time. We want to help train some of the young men and send them back to their own country with a clear gospel message. This is their desire. Many believers have already left that country and we need to pray for them that they will return and take the light. That is a great sacrifice in such circumstances.

We also need New Testaments in Tagalog and Nepalese and also even English (education in some African countries is in English). If anyone has some old Bibles in English that they do not use, please send them to us, and also any good Christian books, by authors such as McArthur, Piper, or Spurgeon; they would be most gratefully received and well used.

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## The Gospel in China – 1910-1925

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*by Bob Davey*

Within China the beginning of the twentieth century brought in a period of unprecedented open-mindedness to the Christian message and of friendliness towards its messengers. Between 1900 and 1919 the number of Protestant societies at work throughout China increased from sixty-one to one hundred and thirty. The high point of missionary penetration was in the mid-1920s when there were 8500 foreign missionaries in China. Altogether this period was a fruitful time for the gospel in China. The total Chinese Protestant community reached the half million landmark during this period.

The period 1910-1925 saw the rise of Chinese Independent churches. Some of these developed from mission churches but the majority followed the lead of the Chinese Christian Union which had been formed in Shanghai in 1905 with the express purpose of evangelisation and developing Chinese churches by the Chinese themselves. Soon these churches were to be found in all the major cities. Pentecostal groups also emerged.

### *The Republic of China (1912-1916)*

The Republic of China was proclaimed in Nanjing on 1 January 1912 with Sun Yat-sen as provisional President.

Sun Yat-sen (1866-1925) was the popular leader among the students and the overseas Chinese. He had received much of his education at the hands of Protestants in Honolulu, was known to be a Christian and had been baptised in 1884 as a Congregationalist in Hong Kong, where he also qualified as a doctor. Sun Yat-sen's political philosophy can be summed up in his 'Three Principles of the People'. These principles were, nationalism (overthrowing the Manchus and ending foreign hegemony over China), democracy (popular elected republicanism) and people's livelihood (social welfare). He liked to compare these three principles with Abraham Lincoln's 'Of the people, by the people, for the people'. After a coup he had plotted failed, he based himself abroad for sixteen years in Europe, the United States, Canada and Japan. He lectured and raised funds for his party which eventually was to emerge in 1912 as the Kuomintang (KMT, Chinese Nationalist Party). Sun Yat-sen returned to

China in December 1911. However, Yuan Shikai, who commanded the Northern Beiyang army, seized the power from Sun Yat-sen, who stood down to prevent civil war. Soon Yuan Shikai declared himself Emperor but was forced to abdicate in 1916 and he died shortly afterwards, leaving a power vacuum.

### *Missions up to the First World War*

The period leading up to the outbreak of the first World War in 1914 was a period of intense activity by Protestant missions. This period also saw the arrival of Pentecostals from both the USA and Britain. The American denominational missions had in their hands the larger part of the medical and higher educational work of Protestants. At this period Protestants led the field in China for these institutions. Their standards were higher than the state institutions and they were very popular. However the care of these institutions and the care of the structures of denominational church activities absorbed much of the energies and resources of the denominational missions including their new recruits. By 1911 it is calculated that less than half of all the missionary force was engaged in any direct evangelistic work. The proportion is considerably smaller if one were to omit the China Inland Mission and its associates who were almost exclusively devoted to evangelism in one form or another. The rapid advance of liberal theology with its emphasis on a social gospel accelerated this trend away from evangelistic activity aimed at personal conversion to Christ with a clear testimony to the experience of saving grace.

From the beginning in 1807 and up to this period Chinese converts of the Protestant missions were mainly from the middle and lower classes and made up of mostly men rather than women. The majority of converts were farmers, shop-keepers, artisans, street-vendors and labourers. While fairly large churches came into being in the cities, converts were more numerous in the rural districts, mainly due to the zeal of the pioneer missionaries both foreign and Chinese who propagated a clear biblical message. Though converts were criticised by their own people as 'rice Christians', that is to say they were in it for personal gain, the fact is that in general the converts were noticeable for a clear change in their character for the better. The fruit was good. Vices such as the opium habit, gambling, unchastity, lying, cheating, backbiting and filthy language were abandoned. Dread of evil spirits was cast out. Truthfulness in business, forgiveness of enemies, a healthy family life, patience in persecution and zeal in witness were commonplace. Ancestor worship was firmly rejected, although family pressures were often intense for Christians to compromise in this area.

There was a massive increase in the number of foreign missionaries seen in China from the time of the appeal for a thousand new evangelists for China in five years by Hudson Taylor at the 1890 Shanghai Missionary Conference. The appeal had been very bold because the total number of missionaries in China at the time of the call was under 1300. Not only was the vision vindicated by fulfilment but the increase of missionary candidates accelerated the more and by 1914 there were 5462 missionaries in China, an increase of over fourfold in less than 25 years. Inevitably there was a watering down of the gospel by the influx of many social gospellers with a liberal theology among the new recruits. The level of understanding of the gospel in many of their professing converts turned out to be minimal. Clear changes in character for the better in them were not always evident. The inability to give a clear testimony to the saving power of Christ in their lives became almost common-place in the churches under the liberal gospel influence and even more lamentably in the Chinese pastors trained by them.

#### *Ecumenism after the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference of 1910*

The Edinburgh World Missionary Conference of 1910 led to ambitious plans in China to unite missions organically under one umbrella with a minimalistic confession of faith. There had always been some co-operation in common projects which were beyond the scope or resources of individual missions, such as Bible translation work. But now the idea was to unite all missions in China into one body. Anglican and Presbyterian missions were suited to setting up denominational federations in China and did so.

In 1913 the International Missionary Council, the offshoot of the Edinburgh Conference, organised a conference in Shanghai under the energetic leadership of John R Mott. The agenda was to arrange a survey of all the missionary fields in China, settle a common procedure for entering new fields, encourage evangelism by the Chinese of their own and to bring all the churches under one umbrella which was to be called 'The Christian Church in China'. Other steps were to be taken for the better training of Chinese Christian leaders and the setting of academic standards for the selection of missionaries. Pleas were made to cooperate in the expansion of Christian education, including theological schools, and improve their standards. Likewise cooperation was sought for the production of Christian literature (including a common hymn book), language schools, medical work, women's work, and business efficiency. Finally, a plea was made for an organic unity of missions with federations to be set up on a local level, provincial level and a

national level. A China Continuation Committee was formed to carry on the work of the conference. This committee was very active under very able full-time secretaries, E C Lobenstine of the American Presbyterian Mission (North) and Cheng Ching Yi, (C Y Cheng) pastor of a Chinese Independent church in Peking (Beijing).

In 1914 the China Continuation Committee invited A L Warnshuis of the American (Dutch) Reformed Mission to be National Evangelistic Secretary. He formed the Forward Evangelistic Movement and launched a four-year campaign which held fourteen special conferences in that year alone. Laymen and laywomen helped with the preaching and the secular press was utilised. The YMCA and YWCA participated enthusiastically.

The consciousness of being a single Christian movement and community in China was facilitated by the emergence of Summer Resorts as refuges for the foreign missionaries and their families from the dangerous summer heat. This threw together missionary families across the missionary divide and gave opportunity for sharing news and having spiritual fellowship. Many a prayer meeting cemented friendships and stimulated the lonely worker. These resorts became prominent in such places as Peitaiho, Kuling, Kuliang and other smaller places. Conferences were also organised in these for missionaries, pastors and other Christian workers for study and the deepening of the Christian life. Overseas speakers were invited regularly.

#### *The First World War (1914-1918)*

There was no marked change in attitude of the Chinese toward Christians until after the close of the war. Open-mindedness was increasing rather than decreasing. Any anti-German feeling against German missionaries was overcome by the American Lutherans stepping in. Missionary work continued normally, except missionary doctors were drafted by their respective countries for war duty. Even here stability was maintained by replacement doctors from the USA. 200,000 Chinese labourers were recruited by the British and French armies to work behind the fighting lines in France. The YMCA in England and America undertook evangelistic, educational and recreational work among them. Missionaries were commissioned as officers to manage these Chinese.

The effectiveness of the missionary educational system in China became evident during this period. Relations with the government and government schools were friendly. Only a third of the students came from Christian homes.

At the Peace Conference in Paris four out of five of the Chinese delegates were former students in mission schools! However there were criticisms which ranged from the poor quality of Chinese scholarship in the higher colleges to the fact that often professing Christian graduates regarded themselves as elitist and felt out of place in their humble local churches.

Social relief programmes progressed unhindered in spite of the criticisms of the fundamentalist premillennials who were looking for a near return of the Lord Jesus and regarded these programmes as an unnecessary distraction from the task of seeking immediate salvation of souls. The range and extent of the social work of missionaries, churches, and other organisations catering for specific social needs and for combating social evils brought credit to the gospel. Examples were famine and plague relief, havens for the blind, deaf and dumb, orphanages, opium refuges, refuges for oppressed women, boys' clubs and free schools. Also Social Service Leagues and Clubs opposed the many evils in society such as the opium trade, foot-binding of infant girls, concubinage, slavery, infanticide, suicide, polygamy, bribery and all forms of vice. The Salvation Army arrived in China in 1916 and by 1919 had thirteen centres.

The war years saw fairly rapid progress in transferring responsibility to Chinese leaders especially in social work and higher educational establishments. The Chinese also took a larger share of responsibility in financing these.

The True Jesus Church was founded in Beijing in 1917. This indigenous church movement was Pentecostal, millenarian and exclusivist.

### *Aftermath of the First World War*

The end of the war saw the prestige and power of the Westerner sharply reduced. Also delay in granting China equal nation status by the Powers caused bitter anti-foreign feeling to erupt. There was a rising tide of Nationalism worldwide, China included. The altered status of the Westerner in China is seen in the fact that the new government of Russia and the newly founded Country-States in Europe were denied the benefits of the 'unequal treaties'. Indeed abolition of the 'unequal treaties' in force became a major platform of the Nationalist Party. From now on the Christian missions could not be supported by the unquestioned prestige of the West. This was not a bad thing as this was a step towards freeing the gospel from a perceived association with

politics and hated Western imperialism. Of course this process did not happen overnight nor was it welcomed by some missionaries, but it did happen speedily after 1925.

### *Reaction against Liberal Theology*

Between 1910-1915 a series of booklets was published in the USA called *The Fundamentals* which set forth the tenets of biblical Christianity which we know as Evangelicalism. Free distribution was organised so that all leaders in the Christian world, such as pastors, theological professors, theological students and missionaries received copies. Over three million free individual copies were thus distributed. The significance for China of this stand for the historical gospel in America was in the fact that after the First World War the Americans took over the leadership in world missions in terms of numbers of their personnel and their resources. It was inevitable this controversy should appear in China because there conservatives were especially numerous, represented by the China Inland Mission and its associates, nearly all the smaller missions and a number of missionaries in the main Protestant denominational missions.

In 1920 *The Bible Union* was formed in China with a clear evangelical Statement of Faith and with the object of resisting the tide of liberalism in the missionary agencies in China. They lobbied the home boards of management to accept only candidates faithful to the biblical gospel and urged fidelity to the Scriptures in religious teaching in the Christian schools and colleges in China. This action was resented. The conflict was a bitter one. By 1923 *The Bible Union* had over 2000 members.

It was at this time that the CIM, with associates, passed the 1000 missionary mark. The CIM was a critic of sending students abroad for theological training, especially to America. Too many chose not to return, were not able to adapt to the conditions they found in the churches when they did return, preached too academically, often lacked the inward experience and power of the gospel or were ruined by liberal theology. Their chosen path to training Chinese Christian leaders was systematic Bible teaching, familiarity with the Bible, priority of preaching, active evangelism and on-the-job training in local churches.

### *The Republic of China – War Lord Era (1916-1928)*

The power vacuum in China created by the abdication and death of Yuan Shikai in 1916 ushered in the *War Lord Era*. This was a period of complex

chaos during which China was ruled by shifting coalitions of competing provincial military leaders. During the First World War Japan fought on the Allied side. Japan seized the German holdings in the province of Shandong (Shantung). The Warlord government in Beijing also agreed that Japan should have authority in southern Manchuria and eastern Inner Mongolia. At the end of the first World War the Paris Peace Conference confirmed Japan's claim to Shandong. Beijing's sell-out became public and led to massive student demonstrations on 4 May 1919. This in turn led to a national awakening known as the May Fourth Movement/New Culture Movement in which students advocated social and political theories ranging across the whole political spectrum including the new-emerging Russian Communism. Many student clubs appeared, acting as hotbeds of debate. Three things they resented – infringement on freedom of thought or expression, curtailment of China's sovereignty and disparagement of Chinese culture by foreigners.

This rekindled the cause of republican revolution. In 1921 Sun Yat-sen headed a government in the south, and allied with the nascent China Communist Party (CCP) sought to unify China. The alliance with the then tiny CCP brought funding and co-operation from Russia. Sun Yat-sen died in 1925 and was succeeded by General Chiang Kai-shek (1887-1975).

### *The start of a revival*

The stirrings of a revival appeared in 1925. This heralded over a decade of revival in which strong Chinese leaders were to emerge within the Chinese churches. These leaders, in due course, were to help prepare and guide the Chinese Church through the ultimate test of persecution from a totalitarian, atheistic Communist regime determined to eliminate them completely from the face of the earth. Their story is fascinating and instructive.

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## Pastor Hsi

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*A forgotten foreword from Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones*

*By Roger Weil*

I was recently browsing in a second-hand book shop when I came across a 1956 edition of *The Life of Pastor Hsi* written by Mrs Howard Taylor. I had read the book fifty years ago but had forgotten that it contained a foreword by Dr Lloyd-Jones. As one might expect the Doctor had some instructive things to say both about the importance of reading good books and the apostolic nature of Pastor Hsi' work. It is reproduced here for the benefit of *Reformation Today* readers.

Firstly, a brief word about Pastor Hsi himself. A Chinese scholar (1836-1896) was led to Christ in 1879 by the saintly Methodist missionary, David Hill. Dr Lloyd-Jones describes Pastor Hsi as a truly apostolic pioneer missionary who confronted and overcame the powers of darkness by frequent and often prolonged seasons of prayer and fasting. A born leader he was instrumental in planting many churches throughout southern Shansi and as the Doctor suggests, his life and labours remind one of the Book of Acts itself.

Secondly, a word about a perhaps forgotten aspect of Dr Lloyd-Jones' preaching. I can recall his actually recommending this very book from the pulpit in 1954 and my rushing out to buy it! He was not infrequently accustomed to recommending good books to his congregation to our great and lasting benefit – J C Ryle, Robert Haldane, Charles Hodge, John Calvin, Matthew Henry, Jonathan Edwards, the life of David Brainerd by Jonathan Edwards, M'Cheyne, John Owen, Richard Sibbes, and Hudson Taylor to name a few. Pastors today could follow the Doctor's example by sharing some of their own reading with their congregations. By this means the habit of reading good books is fostered and thereby spiritual understanding deepened. I for one am deeply grateful to the Doctor for this aspect of his ministry.

## Foreword

I count it a real privilege to be asked to write a foreword to this great book, and to have my name associated with it. It affords me an opportunity of expressing my profound admiration for everything that I have ever read by its distinguished author. Likewise I can thus express my sense of gratitude to the authorities of the China Inland Mission for deciding to issue this *Life of Pastor Hsi*, which had formerly been in two volumes, in one beautiful and compact volume.

A foreword is really unnecessary, and any attempt to underline or to call special attention to the salient features of the book is quite otiose, as all this is done by the book itself. Certainly no one who has ever read a book by Mrs Howard Taylor will need any kind of 'appetizer'.

To attempt to praise this book would be almost an impertinence, but I may be permitted to say that I regard it as a classic and one of the really great Christian biographies. The ultimate way of judging the true value of a book is to discover its effect upon our personality as a whole. Many books entertain and divert, others provide intellectual stimulation or appeal to our artistic or aesthetic sense, but the truly great book affects us more vitally, and we feel that we shall never quite be the same again as the result of reading it. Such is the effect produced by this *Life of Pastor Hsi*. To read it is to be searched and humbled—indeed at times to be utterly humiliated; but at the same time it is stimulating and exhilarating and a real tonic to one's faith. In all this of course it approximates to the Bible itself.

The one word which describes the whole atmosphere and character of the book is the word *apostolic*. One feels this about the character of Pastor Hsi himself, and as one reads about his labours and the results to which they led in the formation of little churches, one is constantly reminded of the Book of the Acts of the Apostles. Whatever view one may hold on apostolic succession, no one can deny that in this account of Pastor Hsi, and the churches in his district of China, we are reading of something that is a direct continuation of what happened in the early days of the Christian Church. I have often felt that the history recorded in the Acts is but an extended commentary on Paul's inspired statement that the gospel is 'the power of God unto salvation'. I felt exactly the same as I read this book. It thrills with power and the only explanation of the extraordinary things which it records is what the New Testament tells us about the ministry of the Holy Spirit. It is indeed nothing but a record of what *he* did to and with Pastor Hsi, what *he* taught him and enabled him to do.

As for the man himself he was by any standard a great man. His personality fascinates and attracts; indeed there was in him that quality of loveliness which is always a characteristic of true greatness. As a natural man he was



*Pastor Hsi in the centre of the group.*

gifted with unusual intellectual power and an enquiring mind. Moreover, he was cultured and well educated and deeply versed in the learning of his own country. He was a strong character and a born leader with perhaps a tendency, not unusual in such men, to be masterful and imperious and utterly impatient of incompetence. Likewise he had great courage and determination and an assurance born of the realisation of his own qualities.

When we look at him, however, after his conversion and as he developed in the Christian life, we see a change which as I have already said can only be explained by the miraculous power of God's regenerating grace. The outstanding characteristic was his spirituality. He was truly a man of God in the real sense of the word. His simple, childlike faith which yet was strong and unshakable was astonishing. He took the New Testament as it was and put it into practice without any hesitations or reservations. He disciplined himself and his life in a most rigorous manner. The result was that everywhere we are impressed by his humility and his extraordinary balance and sanity. Indeed his humility and his self-control and discipline at certain times move one to tears, especially when one remembers what he was by nature.

What is the great lesson taught by this biography? There are many, but if I were pressed to single out one which is preeminent, it would be that we are shown here that the Christian life is most accurately described as *the fight of faith*. Pastor Hsi had no difficulty in understanding what Paul means when he says that 'we wrestle not against flesh and blood but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places' (Eph 6:12). He not only believed in the Holy Spirit but also in the reality of evil spirits, and he fought them not by trying to cultivate the passivity of the mystics but by 'putting on the whole armour of God' and using it with all his might.

Much light is cast in this book on several subjects which are of great interest and importance and which have often led to controversy. For instance Pastor Hsi was a great believer in the value of fasting when he gave himself to a season of prayer. Prayer and fasting seemed to him to go together. Is it possible that the real explanation as to why so many of us do not take the question of fasting seriously is that we have never taken prayer as seriously as Pastor Hsi did?

Again on the vexed question of faith healing there is a great deal to be learnt from this book. Pastor Hsi believed in it and practised it, and there are some remarkable cures reported. But his attitude to this was essentially different from that of many individuals and movements in this country and the U.S.A. which make much of this subject. There was in him a complete absence of the spectacular and the flamboyant, and he was particularly careful not to make loose statements and exaggerated claims; indeed it is here that his sanity and balance stand out most clearly. He believed in using drugs and other means, and he organised a great system of refuges for the opium addicts. He was acutely aware of the dangers connected with the whole subject and always proceeded in a most cautious manner. It is particularly interesting to note how he became increasingly cautious as the years passed. The effect of all this is that one does not have the usual feeling that most of the purported results can be explained in terms of psychology. One feels rather that they are true, unmistakable cases of faith healing which can be explained in no other way.

It is exactly the same with the question of demon possession. Here again valuable evidence is provided which establishes the reality of this condition as a clinical entity and which shows that there is but one effective treatment.

There are also many other matters of absorbing interest, but Pastor Hsi's ultimate interest was not in the cultivation of his own holiness, not in faith healing, or the exorcising of devils or in any other of the wonderful phenomena of the Christian life: it was in his Lord, in the One who had died for him and had revealed himself to him in his love and mercy and grace. He desired to know him better and to serve him more truly.

We thank God for the memory of Pastor Hsi. We thank God for Mrs Howard Taylor, who has recorded the facts of the pastor's life so faithfully and so beautifully. Our prayer is that God may so use this book to all who read it that we all may be likewise filled with Pastor Hsi's love for our blessed Lord, and may become so conformed to him that he may be able to use us in the work of his kingdom even as he used the great Chinese scholar.

*D M Lloyd-Jones Westminster Chapel, 1954*

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## Pierced for our Transgressions

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In RT 228 we considered the first and second stanzas of the Fourth Servant Song. The first stanza is introduction outlining the main points to come. The second has mainly to do with credibility: Who has believed our message? We move now to the third stanza which is the Mount Everest of the five in this mountain range of descriptions of the Servant of Yahweh.

Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows,  
yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted.  
But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities;  
the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.  
We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way;  
and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all (Isa 53:4-6).

Substitution is the thrust and substance of this the third stanza. There is overlap of the main themes in this poetry. The suffering of the Servant is pervasive: disfigurement (52:14), rejected by men, (53:3) crushed (53:5), stricken (53:8), poured out his life to death (53:12). The fourth stanza majors on the willingness of the Servant to be the lamb and the fifth and the final stanza portrays the rich benefits accrued through his being the guilt offering.

Note the personal pronouns and possessive adjectives in italics which tell out the fact of substitution:

But *he* was pierced for *our* transgressions, *he* was crushed for *our* iniquities; the punishment that brought *us* peace was upon *him*, and by *his* wounds we are healed. *We* all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of *us* has turned to *his* own way; and the LORD has laid on *him* the iniquity of *us* all.

This is the most important assertion of substitutionary atonement in the Old Testament. It foretells the role of the Servant as *the* substitute for sinners. We can view substitution as follows:

The need of a substitute is seen in our pitiful condition – *he took up our infirmities*

The Father is the author of substitution – *the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all*

The Servant is the substitute – *he was pierced for our transgressions*

**The need of a substitute is seen in our pitiful condition** – *he took up our infirmities*

This stanza tells of our infirmities and our sorrows. These are the consequence of our fallen condition. We are all guilty of transgressions and iniquities. We are constantly prone to go astray and turn to our own ways. Our first parents fell into sin and died spiritually and physically. The whole human race inherits the guilt of Adam's first sin and is destitute of the righteousness in which he was created. Not only so but we are all born with sinful and depraved natures. A summary of our woes can be set out as follows:

We are guilty of Adam's first sin which is imputed to us Romans 5:12, 19

We are universally and totally depraved Romans 3:10-19

We are dead in sin and unable to raise ourselves out of that state Ephesians 2:1-3

We are ungodly and without spiritual strength Romans 5:6

We are at enmity to God and will not and cannot submit to his law Romans 8:7-8

We are constant in our trend to evil thoughts and imaginations Genesis 6:5

We are persistent in committing actual sins James 1:14-15

We are plagued by evil hearts out of which sinful deeds proceed Matthew 15:19

I must not allow this awful description of mankind's condition to be generalised in a way that allows its meaning to pass over me personally. Spurgeon helps me here with this observation on the text, *each of us has turned to his own way*. 'There is a peculiar sinfulness about every one of the individuals; all are sinful, but each one with some special aggravation not found in his fellow. It is the mark of genuine repentance that while it naturally associates itself with other penitents, it also takes up a position of loneliness. "We have turned every one to his own way," is a confession that each man had sinned against light peculiar to himself, or sinned with an aggravation which he could not perceive in others. This confession is

unreserved; there is not a word to detract from its force, nor a syllable by way of excuse. The confession is a giving up of all pleas of self-righteousness. It is the declaration of men who are consciously guilty – guilty with aggravations, guilty without excuse: they stand with their weapons of rebellion broken in pieces, and cry, “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way.”<sup>1</sup>

Where can a substitute be found to extract me from this mire? Where is one who is capable of bearing away the guilt of my sin and rescuing me from eternal death?

Complete salvation is achieved by the Servant of Yahweh who stands in for us as our substitute as the text says, ‘Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows.’

**The Father is the author of substitution** – *the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all*

The role of the Father is made clear in Romans 3:25. ‘God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement (NIV).’ A better translation is, ‘whom God put forward as a propitiation’ (ESV).

The framework in which the Servant achieves salvation is Trinitarian. The Servant Messiah is the Father’s gift.

The most persuasive argument against substitution is that it is unjust for an innocent man to take the punishment of a guilty criminal. We can quote the Word of God against this procedure.

Acquitting the guilty and condemning the innocent -  
The LORD detests them both (Prov 17:15).

So how then can it be just for the innocent Servant to stand in for the guilty? The answer is union with Christ. We are one with him. So completely are we united with Christ that justice is maintained as he stands in for us. We are married to him in a spiritual union. If the one half of me is the sinner and the other half is Christ who takes the punishment for my sin that is acceptable.

The Larger Westminster Catechism question 66 reads, What is that union which the elect have with Christ? Answer: The union which the elect have with Christ is the work of God’s grace, whereby they are spiritually and mystically, yet really and inseparably, joined to Christ as their head and husband; which is done in their effectual calling.

When Peter says that believers are ‘partakers of the divine nature’ (2 Peter 1:4), that is not union of essence as the three divine persons are one and the essence of God is incommunicable. Rather we are partakers of the divine nature by transformation into the divine likeness.<sup>2</sup> Our union with Christ is a spiritual union (Eph 5:30; 2 Cor 3:18).

The New Testament affirmation of the Father’s action is found in 2 Corinthians 5:21. ‘God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.’ This verse is full of marvels which I outline like this:

The first marvel is to find someone who is able to stand in for us and take away our sin. He must have no sin of his own. He must be a lamb that is without blemish. It is hard for us sinners to conceive of one who has no sin but Christ is sinless. ‘And in him is no sin (1 John 3:5 cf Heb 4:15; 1 Peter 2:22-23). He must not only be a man like us but he must be divine in order to carry the enormous load of our wickedness and guilt.

The second marvel is that God’s Son was willing to sacrifice himself for us.

The third marvel is that the Father was willing to place on his Son the iniquity of us all.

The fourth marvel is that the Father takes the perfect righteousness of his Son and places it upon the believer like a white garment and then declares that believer to be righteous in his sight.

### **The Servant is the substitute** – *he was pierced for our transgressions*

First we note the severity of piercing. ‘He was pierced.’ The Hebrew word used here is *Halal* meaning to pierce, to kill or to slay. In John 19 we read that the soldiers did not break Jesus’ legs because they found him already dead but instead a soldier thrust his spear into Jesus’ side and out came a sudden flow of blood and water which shows that the pericardium around his heart was pierced. That ends any idea that Jesus could be taken down from the cross alive (John 19:31-37). The apostle John goes on to quote Zechariah, ‘They will look on me, the one they have pierced.’ Zechariah uses the Hebrew word *daqar* which means pierce or thrust through.

Secondly we note that it was ‘for us’ that he was pierced. He took our place. He received what we deserve. Imputation is taught by the sacrifices in the

OT. An example is Leviticus 16 which describes the sacrifices to be made on the day of atonement. Verses 20 to 22 tell of Aaron laying both his hands on the head of a live goat and confessing all the sins of the Israelites. The goat was then taken to a desert place and released. The picture is one of our sins being removed by the imputation of them to the scapegoat.

Exodus 12 describes the escape of the Israelites from Egypt. Each family was required to kill a lamb and sprinkle the blood on the door posts and lintels. The Passover lamb functioned as a penal substitute dying in the place of firstborn sons. The wrath of God visited the Egyptians and the firstborn were slain but the Israelite firstborn escaped with their families. The apostle Paul makes it plain that we who are united to Christ escape the wrath of God because Christ our Passover lamb has been sacrificed (1 Cor 5:7).

Jesus expressed this when he declared, 'For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many' (Mark 10:45). William Lane comments, 'The Son of Man takes the place of the many and there happens to him what would have happened to them. ... The many had forfeited their lives, and what Jesus gives in their place is his life.'<sup>3</sup>

The wonder of this sacrifice for me the sinner evokes a response which is gratitude, worship and commitment.

His hands and feet and heart, all three  
were pierced for me on Calvary;  
and here and now, to him I bring  
my hands, feet, heart, an offering.<sup>4</sup>

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*Note* The book *Pierced for our Transgressions Rediscovering the glory of penal substitution* by Steve Jeffery, Mike Ovey and Andrew Sach, 370 pages, paperback, IVP, 2007, was reviewed and commended by Bill James in RT 218 in a review article on penal substitution.

<sup>1</sup> C H Spurgeon, *Morning and Evening Exercises*

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Watson, *A Body of Divinity*, Banner of Truth, p. 46.

<sup>3</sup> William Lane, *Mark*, page 384.

<sup>4</sup> PRAISE! 426.

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## Book Reviews

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### **Baptism in the Early Church.**

Hendrick F Stander and Johannes P Louw,  
192 pages, Reformation Today Trust and ARBCA, Available from Evangelical Press.

Standar and Louw provide a detailed description of baptism as practised in the first four centuries. Chapter 26 provides a summary of conclusions which are summarised below. Quotations from Standar and Louw are in quotation marks.

Baptism signified regeneration through union with Christ and the washing away of sins. Dying with Christ and rising again to newness of life was symbolised by going down into the water and rising from it to a new life. This act was followed by the candidate who had removed his old clothes being given new clothes (often white clothes). These symbolic features underscored the original, theological base at least in the first three centuries.

The 'performative' function of baptism developed gradually along the lines that the actual performance of baptism conveyed benefits. The three benefits in the performative act of baptism were, 1. Remission of sins, 2. Guaranteed entrance into heaven, and, 3. Bestowal of spiritual blessings (Chrysostom lists ten such blessings besides the remission of sins, such as filial adoption, sanctification, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit).

It was the fact that baptism came to be believed to remove sin that led to the extension of baptism to small children and finally to infants. 'Though some leaders (Tertullian and Gregory of Nazianzus) opposed this development others (Cyprian) strongly advocated this trend. Baptism became the most exclusive donator of Christian blessings. The symbol became the actual means. The rite of baptism itself rather than Christ, became the guarantee of eternal salvation.'

'Probably the first instances of infant baptism occurred in the latter part of the third century.'

'While immersion seems to have been the regular practice, the mode was never a real issue. It is the *meaning* of baptism that underscored the different theologies and practices. When sprinkling was administered it involved a proper wetting and not a few drops on the forehead.'

'It needs to be remarked that the contention often found in modern literature, viz. that adult baptism in the early Church entailed a missionary situation, cannot be substantiated by the relevant patristic literature, since the transition from adult baptism to infant baptism occurred at a time when Christianity was already a widespread phenomenon in the ancient Church. Therefore it is also unsound to scrutinise the New Testament writings for allusions to infant baptism, since the latter involved a historical development.'

In other words infant baptism in the New Testament does not exist. The practice developed later.

This historical development was the gradual move toward baptising babies so that they would enjoy the benefits as described above.

A new book of 900+pages by Everett Ferguson on Infant Baptism and the Mode of Baptism has just been published in the USA.

The sub-title is *Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries*.

We look forward to reading this work.  
*Editor*

### **The Missionary Call**

Find Your Place in God's Plan for the World

M David Sills, Moody Publishers, 246 pages, paperback, 2008

The Bible makes clear that every Christian is called to serve God in many ways. The problem comes in identifying those ways and doing what is necessary to prepare for them. In the light of Jesus' command to carry the gospel to the ends of the earth, one pressing problem is to discover precisely where you and I fit into this comprehensive goal. Dr Sills' book speaks to us on this subject with wisdom drawn from his own years of missionary service. He now serves as professor of Christian Missions at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky.

Before I tell you what he says, let me tell you that this book is extremely easy to read. Some of us need such books to look into!

What is a missionary call? In general it is the call to every Christian to be engaged in international missions. While that is clear, Sills finds it helpful to immediately divide us into two categories: 'Some of us are senders and some are goers' (p.30). His book contains the materials to eventually find our place in this division.

As a general rule Sills tells us, 'You find God's will by getting as close to Jesus as you can and staying there' (p. 34). This is not a mystical statement. It means to start by praying and seeking to find the same delight in doing God's will that Jesus found. This, of course, is a lifetime program, but it is renewed every day. And finding God's will a little at a time is also a lifetime program. We want immediate results when we pray, but we seldom get them in any conscious way. God leads his people all the time, but much of the time we have no clue as to what he is doing just now.

One important thing Sills stresses is the sovereignty of God. Here that means that he does make sure his people get where he intends them to go. When we come to the end of our earthly journey, we will look back as generations before us have done and sing, 'Jesus led me all the way!' He does not fail us or injure his own program by letting go of our hand. In the meantime, however, we are often in the dark. The promise of Romans 8:28 remains true, but we can give little account of what is happening at the moment (pp. 87-89).

Beyond the fact of our ignorance the book in fact throws a great deal of light on those dark places. It does so by citing the varied experiences of many missionaries over the centuries. Here you will find the stories of the apostle Paul and the

experiences of Elizabeth Elliott. Here you will see the influences God brought to bear on men as different as J Hudson Taylor and Cameron Townsend.

Sills is in touch with the deep feelings of those who take their responsibility in missions seriously. Listen to this: Many struggle with where they should invest their lives for missions service. Oddly enough, many think it must be a place they do not want to go-as if not following your desire or even being miserable will be more pleasing to God (p. 45).

He reminds us that just as we love to see our children enjoying the gifts we parents give them, God loves to see us enjoying his gifts of direction and guidance that he works in us, often below the level of our consciousness. If we remind ourselves that our present experience is his will, we can find such enjoyment. 'God does indeed have a specific will for your life, but you cannot sit down with a blank sheet of paper, figure it out, and map out the rest of your life' (p.45).

If what I have said means that you won't find out God's plan for your whole life later today, Sills helps us to see why. The plan unfolds, for some slowly, for others quickly. Knowledge of missions from books and missionary biographies often plays a role. One man or woman may start quickly by selecting a field they suppose they'll give their life to. That's their beginning.

William Carey went to India, served with great distinction through his lifelong career there, and ultimately went from his home in India to his home in heaven. Jim Elliott fulfilled his calling by going to the jungles of Ecuador for only a few years until he was martyred. . . . My former

college professor fulfilled his missionary calling by going to serve in Korea for five years before returning to a Christian college in the United States where he taught and encouraged hundreds of young students to consider missions. Ralph Winter fulfilled his missionary calling by serving in Guatemala, and then returning home to establish and preside over the U. S. Centre for World Mission from where he has mobilized and equipped thousands to go into the world (p. 198).

Carey and Elliott spent their lives on their fields. God had a different plan for the other two. Along the way lots of roadblocks may appear. Sills devotes one whole chapter to one that is not uncommon. It discusses the question, 'What do I do if my spouse does not feel called?' The question is treated sensitively by taking into consideration the spouse's feelings and the mission society's demands as well as the feelings of the one who feels called (pp. 113-124). Some of the discussion may surprise you with its wisdom.

Dr Sills' book does not contain a neat and brief formula for discovering what God will do with your life. But he closes it by addressing us personally: Yes, there is a missionary call, and it is so personal that no one else can comprehend it fully. My prayer is that, if God is calling you to missions, you will hear and respond to his call, and if he is not, that you will stay and follow his leading. In chapter 2 he considers the children's catechism question, 'How can you glorify God?' and its answer, 'By loving him and doing what he commands.' We have also considered Psalm 37:4, 'Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart.' What are the desires of your heart? *Tom Wells*

## Finally Alive

John Piper, Christian Focus, 201 pages, paperback, 2009

This book is devoted to the topic of the new birth, what it means to be born again and various implications. John Piper shows clearly that the new birth is fundamental to Christian life and service; without it there is no spiritual life. He shows how it is often misunderstood and undervalued in contemporary Christianity.

The book is clearly set out with an introduction, five parts and a conclusion. Each part is divided into chapters; within the chapters subheadings are used for each section. This means that the book is well set out and easy to read. The headings of the five main parts are:

- I What is the New Birth?
- II Why must we be born again?
- III How does the New Birth come about?
- IV What are the effects of the New Birth?
- V How can we help others to be born again?

In the introduction John Piper refers to some research carried out by the Barna Group into the morals and lifestyle of self-confessed 'born again' Christians. The conclusions from this research are that they differ little from people in the world. Their Christian profession is just an 'add-on' to a worldly lifestyle. This desecrates the real meaning of 'born again'. He then says that he is writing this book to give the clear, biblical meaning of this term. To quote: 'Another reason for a book on the New Birth is to help

followers of Christ to know what really happened to us when we were converted. It is far more glorious than many think it is. It is far more glorious than I think it is. It is wonderful beyond all comprehension' (p. 17).

We then proceed to Part I, which has two chapters. Each chapter throughout the book is preceded by a passage of Scripture. Chapter 1 is headed, 'The Supernatural Creation of Spiritual Life' and the passage is John 3: 1-10. The same passage also precedes chapter 2, which is headed, 'You are still you, but new.' The content of each chapter is based on the passage, but not exclusively. Commenting on John 3: 2, John Piper says that Nicodemus affirms the supernatural in Jesus' ministry but that is not enough. Jesus says that he must experience the supernatural in himself (pp. 30-31).

Part II deals with the question: 'Why must we be born again?'

The first chapter is headed, 'We are spiritually dead' and the passage is Ephesians 2: 1-10. The main part of the chapter consists in an exposition of this passage, with especial reference to verses 1-5. The second chapter in Part II is headed, 'We are willing slaves to sin and Satan' and the third is 'Faith, Justification, Adoption, Purification and Glorification'. In this chapter John Piper makes the connection between Jesus' incarnation and our new birth; to quote:

- (1) If there were no incarnation, there would be no incarnate Jesus Christ to behold and believe in, and that's

the aim of the new birth. So the new birth would not happen.

- (2) If there were no incarnation there would be no vital union and connection between us and the incarnate Christ, and so the new birth would abort, because there would be no source of new, saving, forgiving life (p. 71).

Part III deals with 'How does the New Birth come about?' This has four chapters, but I will just refer to the second, headed 'Through the washing of regeneration'. The passage is Titus 3: 1-8.

In commenting on verses 4-5, John Piper says: 'How did God bring this about? What Paul wants to emphasise here is that it is owing to the way God is, not owing to what we have done- even done in righteousness. Verses 4-5 give three descriptions of the way God is and put these in contrast to anything we might try to do to be born again. 'But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit' (p. 92).

In Part IV 'What are the effects of the New Birth?' all the passages considered are from 1 John and the chapters are very much a running commentary on this epistle. At the start of the first chapter, entitled 'It overcomes the world', Piper refers to a commentary on 1 John by Robert Law entitled 'The Tests of Life', meaning that John wrote this letter to provide the Church with tests or criteria for knowing if we have spiritual life, that is, if we have been born again (p. 123).

From this epistle Piper gives eleven evidences of the new birth. One of these is 'Those who are born of God don't make a practice of sinning.' 1 John 3: 6, 9-10. 1 John 5: 18. The next chapter is headed 'Regeneration, Faith, Love - in that order, showing how faith and love spring from the new birth. The next two chapters in this section are entitled, 'Freedom from the practice of sinning' and 'Loving others with the love of God'. They are both based on passages from 1 John.

Here is a quotation from the latter of these chapters:

' "We ought to lay down our lives for the brothers." Christ loved us by laying down his life for us. When we were born again this love became our love. There is, in the born again person, a deep impulse to die to self that others might live' (p. 160).

Finally, the last section is entitled 'How can we help others to be born again?' This is an urgent and warm exhortation to evangelism.

The concluding section is entitled, 'The New Birth and the New World. Here Piper states that the only hope for mankind is the new birth.

This work is both doctrinal and devotional. It clearly sets out our lost condition and the necessity of the new birth. It also shows that this is not just a one-off event but the beginning of new life and the source of all spiritual life and growth. It is a much needed emphasis today and an antidote to shallow and superficial views of the Christian faith. The book is suitable both for the young Christian and the mature believer. Much of it consists of the exposition and application of Scripture. I recommend it warmly. *Brian Beevers*

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