



# REFORMATION TODAY



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269

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John and Tricia Rubens - see News



Hugh and Lois Collier. Hugh is the new chairman of the Reformation Today Trust. Lois manages the organisation of the Carey Ministers' Conference.

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Front cover picture: Participants of the Daveyton APC conference September 2015 (see APC news).

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## Editorial:

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**ACTS 2:42-47 GIVES US THE REMARKABLE ACCOUNT** of the ministry of the early church that had just come into being following the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Led by the Holy Spirit, the church focused on the teaching of the apostles, the fellowship, the breaking of bread and prayer. These ministries were a blessing to those inside the church, but also had a major effect on those outside, resulting in evangelism and the Lord adding to their number daily. When we consider current struggles in planting new churches and keeping a biblically based ministry in existing churches, it is amazing how quickly the first ever New Testament church in Jerusalem found and established this pattern for functioning as a church.

It is vitally important for us to maintain the same biblical principles for church life and ministry in the 21<sup>st</sup> century even though our world and culture are vastly different from the 1<sup>st</sup> century. The challenge is to apply the timeless principles of God's Word in our situation in our churches. The worldwide readership of *Reformation Today* also represents different cultures, but the same biblical principles apply to all of us. We can also learn from church history including some relatively recent history.

These considerations are a common thread running through most of the content of this issue of *Reformation Today*. The second part of the series by Ian Shaw on the Leicester awakening shows us how Pastor Leslie Land developed and applied such a biblical ministry in the church he was called to lead. This included the ministry to young people. Dr John Gibbens, missionary to Mongolia, takes up this topic, giving an account of his own experience and practical advice.

The book reviewed in this issue about the history of the Korean church, the revival and the persecution that followed, gives us also a lot of insight into the application of a biblical church ministry in such extremely contrasting situations. Nico van der Walt's exposition of Acts 12 gives us an example of the power of prayer.

Mostyn Roberts treats us to his second article on sanctification, focusing on progressive sanctification under the title 'Continuing a good work' referring to the encouraging words of Philippians 1:6. We need this in our individual lives and this will also benefit the churches. May our Lord bless and keep us all in the year 2016! The times are uncertain and the challenges many, but we can put our trust and hope in a living Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church.

*Kees van Kralingen*

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# The Prayer that fetched an Angel

## Acts 12:5

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by Nico van der Walt

**A**N ANGEL FREED PETER FROM A PRISON, BUT IT WAS PRAYER THAT FETCHED THE ANGEL! WHEN WE CONSIDER the promises in the Bible concerning prayer, we are faced with an obvious dilemma: Why are many of our prayers not answered? One question is obvious: Do we pray as we should? Acts 12 gives us an example of an extraordinary answer to prayer!

### **A critical situation**

It is the day before Peter's trial. James has already been executed (v2). What hope is there for him? He is in chains in a prison guarded by soldiers. He has to sleep with a guard on either side of him. And this was before the days when guards came off scot-free if a prisoner escaped! (v19).

Humanly speaking the situation is hopeless, but the church refuses to throw in the towel. Do the members storm the prison? Do they draw up a petition? Do they try to bribe Herod? *No, they have a prayer meeting!*

### **A prayer in line with God's plan**

#### **1. God sometimes does immeasurably more than we ask for or imagine (Eph 3:20)**

The church prayed 'for him' – for Peter. They brought their burden, by name, before the Lord. Yet it would seem that they did not pray for Peter's release, because they did not believe that he was the person knocking at the door after his release by the angel (vv13-16). They probably only prayed for the Lord to strengthen and protect the apostle.

Some people think that we do not get an iota more than what we pray for – limiting God, as it were, by the short-sightedness of our prayers. Such a view is neither scriptural nor borne out by our experience. Yes, let us pray as specifically and as freely as our conscience, the Word and the Holy Spirit allow (at the same time guarding against presumption). Yes, it is true that our prayers have been woven into the outworking of God's council. But he is by no means dependent upon the strength of our faith or the boldness of our prayers.

## 2. They prayed to God

You will probably say that this is obvious. Everything but! To many people prayer is nothing but subjective meditation. It does not matter to them who or what is at the receiving end of their 'prayers'. That which they call God is nothing but a mere focal point for their thoughts.

I once knew an old man, bed-ridden with cancer, who constantly prayed, but with his eyes firmly fixed on an empty beer can on a shelf across the room!

*No! Genuine prayer is directed at the real, living, personal, conscious God. He knows each of us personally. And he has revealed himself as the One who hears our prayers, the One who is omnipotent and faithful, the One who can and will do everything that he has promised. However, there are two qualifications:*

Firstly, we only have access to the Father on the basis of the perfect mediatory work of his Son, Jesus Christ. 'Therefore, brothers ... we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus' (Heb 10:19).

Secondly, our prayers are carried, so to speak, to the Father's throne by the Holy Spirit: 'For through him we both (Gentiles and Jews) have access to the Father by one Spirit' (Eph 2:18).

## 3. They prayed in all earnestness

The Greek word *ektenos*, translated as 'earnestly' in v5, is an interesting word. Literally it means 'stretched out'. Often it refers to intensity and passion rather than duration in time. The meaning of the word is best illustrated by its use in Luke 22:44 in connection with the prayer of the Lord Jesus in Gethsemane: 'And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly (lit *more stretched out*), and his sweat was like drops of blood.' I think it is correct to say that God's Word is concerned with the intensity rather than the duration of prayer. So, for instance, we read in Jeremiah 29:13: 'You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.'

When in Romans 15:30 Paul exhorts his readers to 'join me in my struggle by praying to God for me', he uses another meaningful Greek word, *sunagonidzomai*, which could be translated literally as 'agonise together'. It conveys the meaning of fighting or wrestling or struggling together.

The old Puritan Thomas Watson said, 'How can I know my prayers are prompted by the Holy Spirit? When they are not only vocal, but mental; when they are not only gifts, but groans.'

Which brings us to the question of how I too can pray so fervently. There is only one answer: I need to be empowered by the Spirit. The apostle urges us to 'pray *in the Spirit* on all occasions' (Eph 6:18).

## It was the *church* that prayed

There is much power in individual prayer, but special power when a church prays together in unity of heart and mind. There is a popular conception that power in prayer is dependent on numbers as such, as if that would intimidate God! This is wrong. We need to take note of two things here.

Firstly, in this particular case, it was God's *church* that prayed. And they are the apple of his eye. They are his Son's bride. However, we need to understand that a church is not just made up of a large number of saved and unsaved people, kept together by tradition. No, the New Testament church is made up of true Christian disciples, intimately joined by their common loyalty and great attachment to their Lord. Matthew 18:19-20 sheds light on this: 'Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth *agree* about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.' Unity amongst those who pray together is therefore of the utmost importance. The Lord uses a word which literally means *to harmonise* (Gr. *sumphoneo*) from which we derive our word *symphony*. All therefore need to have the same passion and longing. Squabbling and bad relationships quench the Spirit.

## Essential elements of prayer

- It is directed primarily *to the Father*, offered in the *name of Christ* – on the basis of his merit as Mediator – *in the power and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit*. Everything that may grieve the Spirit must be removed. Above all there must be unity.
- It must be *in harmony with God's revealed truth*, and in step with Christ's intercession on our behalf. True prayer is offered in *dependency and faithful expectancy*. Without faith in God's trustworthiness, we cannot please him. He rewards those that earnestly seek him (Heb 11:6).
- True prayer is characterised by deep *reverence*. Let us never forget with whom we are dealing.
- We must approach the Father with *confidence*. Christ is the perfect Mediator.
- True prayer springs from a *passionate heart*. Cold prayers freeze before they reach heaven!
- There is often need for *persistence* - like that of the widow who would not accept the judge's refusal (Luke 18).

## When we pray together

- *Never be in a hurry*. Trust the Spirit to guide.
- Accept *responsibility* for your role in making the time before the

throne of grace proceed smoothly. Passive hangers-on make things boring for themselves and harder for the rest.

- Pray *creatively*, but with *childlike honesty and sincerity*. Talk to the Lord normally but without banality and familiarity. Avoid prayers which are a mere stringing together of prayer clichés – a meaningless repetition of words.
- *Avoid the excessive use of the Lord's name*. Some people repeat the Lord's name in almost every sentence, to the discomfort of their hearers. We would never do this in a normal conversation. It is a mannerism which may even be a violation of the third commandment.
- *Wait for each other*, so that everyone gets an opportunity to pray. But at the same time avoid uncomfortable silences. If necessary, don't hesitate to pray more than once. Having said this, there may also be from time to time periods of awe when nobody dares to say anything. These times of holy silence will later be remembered as most precious.
- *Link your prayers*. We all stand before the throne of grace together – not as individuals, each with his own separate agenda. Listen to the prayers of others and build upon their requests and arguments. This makes for cohesion and allows the Holy Spirit to lead us into praying for things that we would never otherwise have thought of.
- Without being presumptuous, we should *be as specific as possible* in our prayers. On the other hand, if you are uncertain about whether you should pray about a specific matter, approach the throne of your heavenly Father very carefully, as it were. Consider the teaching of God's Word, and be sensitive to the Spirit's leading. There is such a thing as a pulling in of the reins. But precious beyond words are those sudden and unexpected moments of release and boldness.

### **Lastly, something about praise**

Our prayers should always be saturated by praise. Think of who God is. Think of his names. Think of his attributes: his eternity, holiness, sovereignty, omnipotence, unchangeableness, omniscience, omnipresence, grace, love, faithfulness, patience, justness, wrath. Think of his great deeds through the ages as recorded in the Word and reflected in the history of the church. Praise and thank him for those deeds and their implications.

But do not leave it at the abstract. In Psalm 139 David reflects on the character of the Lord, but he does not only pray about it on an intellectual level. He meditates on the practical effects it has on his life – and praises God for it.

*Nico van der Walt lives in South Africa and has been a pastor.*

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## Leslie Land: A Christian Ministry<sup>1</sup>

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*Ian Shaw*

**W**HEN LESLIE LAND ARRIVED AT MELBOURNE HALL, LEICESTER, IN 1947 PROBABLY HE KNEW THAT HE WOULD be at odds with some aspects of its established Christian ethos. He was there following a time when in the wider Christian world a combination of contemporary, expository, experiential and doctrinal preaching had become largely unknown. The church officers perhaps thought they were extending a signal honour to him in inviting him to come to the church, though it was only after a few weeks thought, he eventually wrote in response to the invitation saying he was ‘delighted to accept the call’ after ‘much prayerful waiting upon God.’

The names and numbers of people either baptised or added to the church membership were listed in the monthly magazine – a weighty product that apparently went into ‘thousands of homes’. He would announce such matters in the following typical way in the pages of the magazine: ‘There will be a Baptismal Service on Sunday evening, 30 January. If you wish to confess the Saviour please let me know. Informal classes (in my Vestry) will re-open on *Thursday 13 January at 8pm.*’ He did not neglect the spiritual wellbeing of those who had been baptised. For January 1949 there was an announcement: ‘On New Year Sunday afternoon, the Pastor hopes to meet all those whom he has had the joy of baptising into Christ since he began his ministry at Melbourne Hall.’ He planned a tea and fellowship meeting followed by ‘a simple act of re-dedication to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ’.



On arriving in Leicester Leslie Land may not have been familiar with the writings of the evangelical Calvinists of the East Midlands from 150 years prior to his ministry – William Carey, John Sutcliff, Andrew Fuller, John Ryland and the like. But his ministry was fully in tune with Fuller’s belief that the gospel was worthy of, and indeed called for, ‘full acceptance’. Speaking in June 1949 on ‘Why Isn’t Everybody a Christian Believer?’ we find one

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<sup>1</sup>Part 2 of three articles on the early years of Leslie Land’s ministry at Melbourne Hall, Leicester, 1947-1950 under the general title ‘A Leicester Awakening’.



of the occasions when he addresses the doctrines of grace explicitly. It is worth noting for how this shaped his ministry:

We might approach an answer to this question from two different plains – the earthly and the heavenly: the manward side and the God-ward side of the question.

On the manward side it is a matter of our human choice and free will<sup>2</sup>... On the God-ward side *conversion* ... is a supernatural happening, the impact of the Spirit of God on a human heart. The Bible, without any apology, presents both aspects of a conversion side by side. ‘No man can come unto Me except the Father draw him,’ said the Lord Jesus; yet from the same lips we hear the tenderest appeal, ‘Come unto Me all ye that are weary and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.’

The Bible says in effect, ‘Choose you this day whom you will serve,’ and yet at the same time, ‘You have not chosen me; I have chosen you’. We must ever seek to hold these great truths of free-will and election in tension – like a stretched piece of elastic ... We do well not to choose the one we think we understand (and therefore like) and neglect the other, but to present *all* the counsel of God and leave the power to Him.

Speaking six months later on ‘Him that cometh to me’, he notes that before speaking of coming to him, Jesus has spoken of the Father giving us to Jesus. He talks of the ‘facet of the Gospel jewel, that the Son of God should so want us that we are, as it were, God’s crowning gift to his Son’.

Here then are two lovely truths side by side. God the Father draws sinners and gives them to his Son; *and* sinners are free to come to him. No, you cannot reconcile or resolve these two precious truths: just hold them reverently ‘in tension’. Do not let *either* go or you will soon join a sect, specialising in *election* or in *free will*.

His constant concern for the application of the truth is apparent when he goes on to say:

I am so glad that God *draws* men. It lifts a burden off my mind for I could never persuade a man to become a Christian. On the other hand I am delighted that men are free to come to Christ, for that means I may go on inviting them in the name and in the love of Christ.

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<sup>2</sup> Land uses ‘free will’ to refer to human responsibility. It is clear from his general approach that he does not believe the human will to be ‘free’.

He applies it evangelistically. ‘That restlessness, that longing in your soul when you hear the gospel preached is a sign and token that the Father is drawing you to Christ – has *given* you to his Son.’

### Young people

It would seem that his labours resulted in an almost immediate blessing among the young people who attended, among whom were several who would later become active in Christian ministry and witness in Leicester and round the world. His ministry among young people and the encouragement he constantly drew from them is remarkable. By April 1948 a Youth Fellowship Library had been started for ‘books of a spiritually helpful character’, with a committee of Leslie Land, J C Wilcox, and two young members – John Ward who would later become an elder and ‘Miss M Shuttlewood’.<sup>3</sup> By October the following year another of the young people noted that the library ‘now contains well over one thousand helpful books’.

His work with young people seems to have raised a few eyebrows. Hence he has a full note about the Youth Fellowship, because someone in the church had ‘thought there might be a little misunderstanding about it in a few people’s minds’. He says that shortly after arriving at Melbourne Hall he had called an open meeting of all young people. Reflecting his concern for a more biblical pattern of the local church he says, ‘Our aim in view was, and is, to break down any and all the barriers that tend to arise between the various organisations and activities in a church, and to foster Christian FELLOWSHIP.’ He explains that this had a purpose – a mission – outside as well as inside the church, where people could be introduced. His gentle humour comes through when he says that such an initiative is ‘not spectacular “red-hot” evangelistic work. It just calls for steady, prayerful, loyal, consecrated endurance. It is rather like gathering rose hips: not very exciting, but they contain Vitamin C!’

Hence it is not another organisation. The committee mainly comprised young people, and he attended the meetings. It is likely that some were concerned about such a committee, and he stresses it is not a governing body and that any matters concerning church business are always referred via him to the Church Committee, and any matters regarding spiritual aspects are made known via him to the elders. He concludes by asking their prayer and says that ‘It already has the seal of God’s blessing upon it. We have a crowd of new faces (at) this new session on Saturday evenings. Please pray that every single one of them may be drawn to the Saviour. *That* is our passion – *that* is our single aim.’

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<sup>3</sup> Mary Shuttlewood, later Mary Ward following her marriage to John Ward mentioned here. He was appointed an elder by Leslie Land at the age of 27. It was through Mary Ward that the bound copies of the church magazine came into my hands.

In the same issue that announced the launch of the library he included a piece he titled 'When Parents Stop Telling'. It is an application of the main message of the book of Judges. He notes that at the exodus the Children of Israel had been told that they should always explain to their children what the Passover meant, and what God had done for them. When a new generation arose that knew not God, it was because parents had stopped telling their children. He urges his readers, 'Tell them, that is, not just about the God of the trees, the flowers and the birds, but tell them about a personal, covenant-making, loving and *redeeming* God.' He continues to apply his theme by saying that 'The *time in history* at which mothers and fathers stop telling their children the story of God's redemption makes very little difference: the effect, the result is just the same then and now – the same in *kind*, but ever worsening in *degree* as civilization advances with an unsaved soul.'

The responsibilities of parents clearly lay heavily on him. Speaking at the end of 1948 on 'What mean ye by this service?' (Ex 12:26-27), he writes about the Lord's Supper, and what we would say if children observed it and asked what it meant, as with the Passover. His points are we should tell our children:

- It is about something that actually happened.
- 'We must tell our children a harder thing.' It speaks of death – *broken bread, outpoured wine.* Not 'my body which *lives* for you' but 'my body which is *given* for you'. His blood which 'is *shed* for you'.
- Tell them that he lives, 'He is present at the feast.' 'He is not in the bread', but his presence is like the trust deeds of a house.'
- Tell them that God has made a covenant, an agreement, with us. 'A lavishly one-sided agreement where God *gives* and we *take.*'
- Tell them it is preaching in action. 'Ye do *show the Lord's death...*'
- Tell them it is a prophecy. The believer at the Lord's Table may say, 'Next time, maybe, at his coming.'

We have more to say about his preaching in the final article in the series, but it illustrates his spiritual creativity that he would keep the form of this verse and expound the Lord's Supper as talking to children.

Towards the end of these first three years he notes that 'fourteen young people have expressed a desire to be *baptised*'. He had held a meeting on New Year's Day 1950, with all who had been baptised during 1949. 'Several young people gave helpful and encouraging words of testimony.' Indeed, while sometimes he addresses parents, he often speaks direct to children and young people of

all ages. In February 1949 he tells them his encouragement: 'My dear young friends, it is a great joy to see so many of you in God's house on Sunday morning.' His message we noted earlier on 'The Christian and this Present World' (Heb 11:13-16) closes with this appeal. 'You young people, come on pilgrimage! Take the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour, unreservedly and wholeheartedly ... Then go out into the world, living at every point of your character and personality *for him*. Set out for the Eternal City, ever looking to Jesus; and then, *on the way*, your life will be a benediction and a means of grace to this present sin-sick world.' This urgent concern recurs several times. 'You young Christians, especially – you who have been baptised into Jesus Christ – hazard your lives for him who laid down his life on Calvary for you and your salvation. Ask God to give you the souls of them that travel with you.'

### **Bible School**

Christians, ministers included, travelled from all over the city and county to attend his weekly Bible School. David Kingdon gives the following anecdote:<sup>4</sup>

I lived in Leicester for a number of years after Leslie Land finished his ministry in Melbourne Hall. Occasionally I would hear his name mentioned especially by members of the generation who had felt the impact of his remarkable ministry. One day an elder of the Bethel Evangelical Church, Wigston, told me a story which illustrates the impact of that ministry on the lives of many of Leslie Land's hearers. It was my friend's custom to attend his weekly Bible School in Melbourne Hall with a group of his friends. More than once such was the sense of awe that came over them that no one spoke in the car as they went home!

An early issue of the magazine carried a Bible School invitation, in which he quotes Hudson Taylor saying, 'There is a living God, he has spoken in the Bible. He means what he says and will do all he has promised,' and infers from this, 'There are few greater necessities in our lives than an intelligent understanding of the Word of God.' Already he speaks of the Bible School as 'proving a tremendous help and blessing to very many within the circle of Melbourne Hall and beyond', and urges the importance of such opportunities in his closing quote from Jeremiah 22:29, 'O earth, earth, earth, hear the Word of the Lord.'

In another note about the Bible School he says, 'It was most encouraging ... to see so many young Christians there.' He was introducing a *responsive* note, leaving aside one week a month in the Bible School to deal with questions and

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<sup>4</sup>From the Preface to *The Appearing of Jesus*.

problems about the Christian life, that anyone could post in a box in advance. By the summer of 1948 he is thankful that, 'The very large attendance at our Bible School week by week is most encouraging. The Lord is crowning our mid-week meetings with his blessing: there is an ever increasing love and interest being manifested in the treasures of his Word. And what a joy to note that the members of our Youth Fellowship are by no means behind in their keenness for Bible Study.' There is perhaps a hint at the demands of the ministry when he adds, "'Wednesday night at eight'" has come to be one of the happiest times of fellowship in Christ along life's difficult way.' The first three years of the Bible School were engaged in working through the first fifteen chapters of Romans and by September 1950 he had started a new series on Hebrews.

### **A church-based ministry**

The foregoing makes little sense apart from the realisation that Land came to the ministry with a commitment to seeing the whole work of the church as being governed by biblical patterns and principles. He was not reluctant to make the point. Just nine months after he arrived we find him preaching on 'Not forsaking the assembly of ourselves' (Heb 10:19-25). He asks why the Hebrew Christians were staying away. In their case he believes it was not indifference but fear. 'It cost them a lot to confess Christ.' But in 1947 he suggested such patterns were at root 'a loss of first love'. One can imagine Melbourne Hall perhaps had been marked by long-established forms as part of a big city church, and that some in his congregation may have felt pricked by such implications. But he clearly felt this was a real issue – 'as the manner of some (nay, of many) is today'. His development is pointed:

All kinds of secondary reasons might be given: A bit of a cold (too much gardening yesterday); the 'so-an-so's' are coming over for the day (you can't give them a cold lunch); some old friends are staying with us – they don't worship anywhere (*very* awkward: one *must* be sociable). Then again many church members have no intention of going *twice* on a Sunday to God's House. Others say: 'We always listen-in to a nice little service on the radio.' And so it goes on.

Why does it matter? He goes for the big reasons – rather like his friend and mentor Lloyd-Jones. Noting the context of the passage he says, 'This gathering of ourselves together is an inseparable part of a great evangelical, redeeming purpose in the world.' His subsequent points are:

- Jesus has opened a way back to God so 'we *must* gather together.'
- In gathering we affirm 'our great and holy faith, a faith which is greater and more sure than all the world's habits of thought and chatter'.

- ‘Let us consider one another ...’ ‘One another ... we are travelling home together ... each for the other and for the whole Body of Christ.’

He was not a partisan non-conformist. He interestingly says, ‘We need humbly to pray for our many faithful brethren in the State Church ... who are sorely plagued and harassed by a movement in that church to lead them – if not to drive them – back again to that sorry pre-Reformation state of affairs, with its candles, confessionals and crucifixes.’ It seems clear that he had considered entering the Church of England ministry while still at Seaford College and Leslie Land had obviously posed the idea to Lloyd-Jones that he might consider applying to the Church of England.<sup>5</sup> Melbourne Hall held strong links with several prominent Christians who worked with the Anglican Communion. These included Christians whose names now largely are sadly forgotten – John Dean who was a major force for good in northern Nigeria, and John Sperry who held a senior position in the Anglican Church in northern Canada. But as he saw blessing on his work at Melbourne Hall it served only to reinforce his confidence in the biblical pattern.

He was not without early appreciation of the force of this position from those in parts of the fellowship. For example, by November of the first year of his ministerial tenure Young Life Campaign<sup>6</sup> members in Melbourne Hall had met and ‘decided unanimously to form a Church Group with a view to “more actively supporting their own Church and Minister, whilst retaining their interest in local branch activities of NYLC.”’

His esteem for the Lord’s Supper was part and parcel of his church-based ministry. We saw that in his consideration of the verse ‘What mean ye by this service?’, and he returned to the subject in May 1950 on the injunction ‘Let a man examine himself.’ In his characteristic way he builds from a deceptively straightforward account. ‘I have just returned from a conference of Christian students in Swanwick, Derbyshire.’ He remarks, ‘There was a wonderful fellowship and oneness in spirit.’ He bridges this to how Christians have often been divided over the meaning of the Lord’s Supper. His anti-sacramentalism surfaces when he talks of how the service had first developed. So ‘*someone* had

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<sup>5</sup> Lloyd-Jones was not resistant to the idea. He wrote to Land, ‘As far as I am concerned there is nothing whatsoever against it. Indeed, I am not at all sure but that in many ways it would be the right thing for you. I am persuaded that Nonconformity is going to have a real fight for existence after this war. It seems to be the case, in England especially, that the Church has a better opportunity.’ (Letter Lloyd-Jones to Leslie Land. 25 November 1940)

<sup>6</sup> The National Young Life Campaign (NYLC) was – and still is – a national network of Christian youth groups for teens and twenties based in the UK. <http://www.younglife.org.uk/younglife/Home.html>

to handle the bread and the cup ... A choice would be made; an elder, esteemed for his life and Christian character, would be asked ... This did not give the particular elder any claim to a special position spiritually; in fact on the next occasion another trusted disciple would be asked to fulfil these duties.’ As numbers grew not all could sit round the table. He observes how the danger of a ‘top table’ got introduced; and how the act of breaking the bread ‘was relegated to *one* chosen elder; and again, ‘in view of our human perverseness, the danger of attributing to this one man some high-priestly office is already lurking at hand ... And so we have come a long way from the simplicity of the Upper Room in Jerusalem through the complexity of the Episcopacy to Roman Catholicism.’

He then goes on at fuller length to warn of the same dangers among free churches, and of how the Lord’s Supper is spoken of as being dispensed’. ‘The Lord’s Supper is not a *dispensation*, it is a *Communion* ... It is not primarily communion or fellowship with other Christians, for – let it be said reverently – this is not a club-dinner ... No, this is the communion of each redeemed sinner with the Redeemer.’ ‘Is the Table open then? *Yes!*’ He was opposed to any check or examination process by the church. ‘Surely there should be some check, some inquest, some examination? Yes, but not by *you*, not by *me*. “Let a man examine himself ...”’

On yet another occasion he spoke of ‘The Lord’s Table’ from the verse ‘This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them’ (Luke 15:2).<sup>7</sup> He starts by referring to the fact that there were those Christians in Scotland who are reluctant to come to the Lord’s Table because they do not think themselves fit to do so. While we may be tempted to feel sorry for them, he insists that in one respect they are right.

They really do sincerely believe and realise that they are coming to meet with Jesus Christ ... The glory, the grace of this feast of memory is the presence of Christ. To gather round the Table is to meet with him. These Highland sinners are *right* there, and we need to recapture the sense of the presence and the holiness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But our Scottish friends are wrong, sadly wrong, in staying away through a sense of their sinnership, for the simple reason that these Pharisees, all unwittingly, were perfectly right when they said, ‘This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them.’<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> This statement would bear reprinting as it stands.

<sup>8</sup> Land ensured the church library held Alexander Smellie’s *Men of the Covenant* (Banner of Truth Trust, 1975). He doubtless would have concurred with Smellie’s record of the covenanting minister urging a woman hesitating at the Lord’s Table to ‘take it, woman, it’s for sinners.’

## A wider ministry

The Swanwick reference – the venue for the annual conference of the then Inter-Varsity Fellowship – indicates that early in his time at Leicester he was having a wider ministry. This again owed something to Lloyd-Jones. After one of their early meetings in July 1939 Lloyd-Jones wrote to him, ‘I cannot tell you how much I enjoyed myself on Wednesday. I was telling Dr Douglas Johnson of the IVF about it ... on the telephone. He will be after you.’ 1950 was not the first time he had spoken at Swanwick. In an intriguing note in March 1948, hinting at the demands that already were mounting, J C Wilcox asks prayer for Leslie Land in undertaking ‘those outside engagements he feels constrained to accept’. He was due to speak at the IVF Swanwick conference on 4 April. The following year he spent two days in May 1949 speaking to students in the Cambridge Inter-Collegiate Christian Union (CICCU). Later that year, in October, he tells his church that in the next ‘week or two’ he has two ministers’ fraternal, a Church Anniversary, a Missionary Conference and a student meeting at Nottingham University. There is also a curious note that he was to address a public meeting in The Little Theatre, Dover Street, on ‘Principles of Nature Cure’.<sup>9</sup>

In those days before easy air travel it was noteworthy that his congregation drew in those from other countries. Reflecting on a morning service on 25 January 1948, for example, he records, ‘In that congregation there were friends from Germany (one-time “enemies”); from Holland; from Sweden; from Yugoslavia; from Latvia ...’

## Evangelistic determination

Several times we have felt the evangelistic resolve beneath his words. To illustrate further, in October of the year he arrived he carried an opening piece called ‘Scandal!!’ and commences with the words that this magazine ‘is going into thousands of homes in Leicester, and to others outside the city and even across the seas’. The tone is typical. He writes on what he calls ‘the most astonishing “Scandal” that has ever come to light’:

Men and women, it’s like this: This world (and that means *you* and *me* and *everybody*) has got away from God – has turned its back on God: and we’re in an awful mess. We can’t run our own lives; we can’t manage our own world – simply because we’re *God’s* creatures and it’s *God’s* world. This *broken relationship* with our Maker is our curse, our undoing; the deep-root cause of all our unrest and misery. Now,

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<sup>9</sup>There is no record what his friend Dr Lloyd-Jones thought of this venture!



God might have left us to go our own perishing way, but he didn't, he followed us! He came down to this runaway world in Jesus Christ and at a place called Calvary the *broken relationship* has been mended.

But he remarks that the New Testament anticipates our unbelief and refers to this message as a scandal, and offence or stumbling block. 'Fancy God saving the world through the crucified Man of Sorrows! Sacrifice! Blood! Revolting! Scandalous!' He appeals, 'Have *you* believed it, friend? Have *you* tried God's way yet? ... Oh men and women, you'll let me speak plainly to you: this is no time for mealy-mouthed language: *We've got to get back to God or perish.*' Two years later he produced an article on 'Not Ashamed of the Gospel', which had been published in a local paper – the *Leicester Evening Mail*.

But evangelism was an aspect of the church's contemporary witness regarding which he had misgivings. The first year of his time in Leicester was but half-way through when he told his members, 'There seems to be something lacking in our modern school of evangelism. It has got into a rut: its very language has become stereotyped and sloppy. The world must sometimes think of us as a company of "cissies", rather than the Church "terrible and as an army with banners". We are lacking in virility, in courage, in moral fibre.'

A characteristic example of how he made application of the Bible can be seen when speaking about Ezekiel 24 and the death of Ezekiel's wife, shortly before the close of his ministry:

I wish that was the only thing that broke your hearts. I wish that you were eaten up with concern for the thousands and thousands of men and women in Leicester who if they were to die tonight are without Christ.

Your energies, your zeal, your love and your fire are for things which will pass away ... your jealousy for church and for nation. Oh, that you would weep ... for the sins of men and women and only have one passion – that they might come to know Christ, whatever the means, whoever has the glory. Even if God comes and sets you aside and says, 'Leslie Land, you've had it'. 'He must increase and I must decrease.'<sup>10</sup>

These closing words gain added poignancy knowing that he was aware of the early signs of the illness that foreshadowed what lay ahead.

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<sup>10</sup>This study can be heard online, along with nine others, at <http://www.melbournehall.org/page23.html>

## ‘Doing an important work’

While Land perhaps would never have arrogated to himself these words of Nehemiah, it is inescapably obvious that he had a deep sense of the significance of the work in which he was engaged, along with a belief that a special blessing had attended it. This was due in part to his general biblical confidence resulting in a recurring emphasis in his ministry that God was working to great ends – ‘dealing with sin and bringing back the glory that has departed’ as he expressed it in the Bible School message on Ezekiel referred to above. We see this confidence in a sermon on the burning bush, in ways that illustrate his distinctive readiness to develop a line of interpretation and then of unanticipated application. A constant theme throughout his years was that in a context of difficulty, persecution, and secularisation and so on, God is at work *secretly*. Here he says that in the situation of Israelite slavery God ‘was preparing his man’. He interestingly talks of how the bush burned but was not consumed ‘because the Eternal was in it’ contains a ‘paradox... stamped on everything in this world that has Christ in it ... It comes in for fire but it is not consumed and out of the very fire there goes forth a message of deliverance and redemption.’ Likewise the Bible itself ‘ever burned but it is not consumed’. He traces this through the Old and New Testaments, and to Wycliffe and Tyndale. Similarly for the Church, ‘humanly speaking the Church is just a common bush – composed of ordinary men and women whom you may meet any day – but God in Christ has chosen to dwell in the midst of her.’ And ‘the greater the burning, the clearer and more insistent the message, and men still turn aside to see this great sight’ and are saved. And likewise too for each individual Christian.

But again and again we see the note of particular, spiritually grounded rejoicing in his remarks to the church. We have seen, for example, his gladness of spirit at the growth of spiritual attentiveness and engagement on the part of his young people. The young people reciprocated without hesitation. In the first January of his ministry he offers a thank you to the young people for the gift of ‘a lovely, huge, shining office typewriter’. He adds how encouraged he is – ‘To see a crowd of young people in the gallery on Sunday is a truly thrilling sight. And to know that you are seeking others and bringing them along to Jesus – well, it’s just grand, and God bless you!’ The same time saw his custom of sending an open letter to the church members. Although, as he says, it was only a few months since he commenced his ministry, ‘Already God has been pleased to grant us signs of a spiritual revival, which has gladdened all our hearts.’ Six months later he includes in the magazine extracts from a letter he had received. I reproduce it in some fullness.

Dear Mr Land,

You do not know me, although I sit ... at Melbourne Hall. I felt I must write this letter to thank you ... When I was seventeen I accepted Christ and was baptised and for three or four years there was none happier than I. Then came the blow, while I was serving in the army; I was injured, my career was ruined and I was discharged. I do not know what happened but it seemed as if in trying to build up a new life I lost touch with God. For two dreary years he was just a shadow. Yet I still went to chapel and tried desperately to hang on to my tottering faith.

Yet never could I seem to penetrate the veil and get near to him. That is, until last Sunday. It was towards the end of your sermon, and then through your words I suddenly realised what was wrong. I was trying to live like the servant of Elisha. There and then I humbly asked the Master to reconsecrate me, to take possession of my whole life again and do with it as he would.

And then the miracle happened, so marvellous I can never hope to fully describe it. The barriers fell, and like a great light the radiant sunshine of the Saviour seemed to flood every corner of my heart. And the glory of his smile is with me as I write this. We sang that last hymn, 'Happy day, happy day', and I am not ashamed to confess that I sang it with a bursting heart and tears in my eyes, for it was a happy day to me, and I went down to that baptismal service as if all the joy in the world had streamed into my soul.

I can never thank you enough for what you have done for me, for I am still in the early twenties and so much lies before. Use this testimony if you wish ... Perhaps it may help someone else.

Well might he say, 'I believe we are on the eve of great things for God.'

*Dr Ian Shaw is a member of York Evangelical church, UK, and a Professor of Sociology.*

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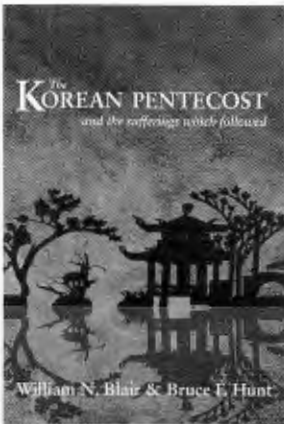
## Book Review

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William N Blair and Bruce F Hunt, *The Korean Pentecost and the sufferings which followed* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2015) 195 pp. ISBN 978-0-85151-244-0

This book is a reprint of the 1977 edition of a remarkable account of the first sixty years or so of the modern church in Korea and especially North Korea. The authors were directly involved as missionaries and it is fascinating to read of their first-hand experience of the Lord's mighty acts in this country. Part 1 tells the story of the beginnings of the church in Korea. The Welsh preacher Robert J Thomas was on board a commercial vessel sailing to Pyongyang. He had already distributed parts of Holy Scripture on the way. At their destination the man on the ship got into trouble with the Koreans who set fire to the ship and killed all those who tried to escape. Robert Thomas did not defend himself but even in his last moments he gave out his last pile of Bibles. When other missionaries visited the region later, they found believers who had been converted by reading these Bibles. This is a wonderful illustration of the Lord's sovereign work and the power of Scripture to transform the lives of people.



This account culminates in the wonderful story of the 1907 revival. At a certain moment the church felt God was not present with them any more. This led to most earnest prayer. The Holy Spirit came down and many people including churchgoers started to confess their sins and plead for mercy. The gospel of grace was preached and there was a large harvest.

The second part of the book describes the sufferings of the church in Korea. The opposition did not come only from the non-believing countrymen, but became much worse as a result of the Japanese occupation from 1910. The peace at the end of the Second World War following the defeat of Japan was short-lived. The Communists who came to power continued and even intensified the persecution of the church. The vivid accounts of the faithfulness of a number of men and women suffering intense persecution are a moving testimony to God's grace and power enabling people to endure to the end.

The book gives a realistic account of Korean believers and the church which had its weaknesses, but also shows the gracious and powerful work of the Holy Spirit leading to real spiritual fruit and faithfulness when persecution came. The only small criticism is that the book is thin on historical background information which would be useful for those less familiar with the history of Korea during this period. Having said this, we should realise that the book does very well describe those events that are of eternal significance. This well-written and gripping story is highly recommended.

*Kees van Kralingen*

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## New Books

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Most of the books by our founding editor, Erroll Hulse, are now available as e-books. His Amazon page is:

[http://www.amazon.co.uk/s/ref=nb\\_sb\\_noss/278-5181224-1467038?url=search-alias%3Dstripbooks&field-keywords=Erroll+Hulse](http://www.amazon.co.uk/s/ref=nb_sb_noss/278-5181224-1467038?url=search-alias%3Dstripbooks&field-keywords=Erroll+Hulse)

Other new books that have been published recently include:

- Melvin Tinker, *A Lost God in a Lost World* (EP Books, 2015), ISBN 978-1-78397-122-0
- Terry L Johnson, *Serving with Calvin* (EP Books, 2015), ISBN 978-1-78397-117-6 (The sequel to *Worshipping with Calvin*)
- J C Ryle, *Daily Readings from all four Gospels for morning and evening* (EP Books, 2015), ISBN 978-1-78397-108-4
- Sinclair B Ferguson, *Child in the Manger. The True Meaning of Christmas* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2015), ISBN 978-1-84871-655-1
- Mark Jones, *Knowing Christ* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2015) ISBN 978-1-84871-630-8
- Sinclair B Ferguson, Derek W H Thomas, *Ichthus. Jesus Christ, God's Son, the Saviour* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2015) ISBN 978-1-84871-620-9
- Allan M Harman, *Preparation for Ministry* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2015) ISBN 978-1-84871-623-0
- J Philip Arthur, *Why Read Church History?* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2015) ISBN 978-1-84871-527-1

We are not able to supply these books; please contact your own bookshop.

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## Continuing a Good Work

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*Mostyn Roberts*

### **Progressive Sanctification**

You are now a Christian.<sup>1</sup> You have been born again, justified through faith, transferred from the dominion of darkness into the kingdom of God's beloved Son and so set apart for God ('definitively sanctified') and adopted as his child. So – what next?

You grow. If you do not, a big question mark hangs over whether any of the above great changes have happened to you at all. For together they mean life, and life does not stand still. If you are a Christian, you cannot stand still. You will grow.

It is right to say as J C Ryle insists in his classic work *Holiness* that 'Sanctification is a thing for which every believer is responsible ... [W]hose fault is it if they are not holy? God, who has given them grace and a new heart, and a new nature, has deprived them of all excuse if they do not live for his praise.'<sup>2</sup> We shall look at that responsibility in due course but we begin with the truth that sanctification (which simply means, the process of being made more holy) is a promise, and a work of God, before it is a work of the believer. The 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith puts it like this in chapter 13:1:

Those who are united to Christ, effectually called, and regenerated, having had a new heart and a new spirit created in them through the virtue of Christ's death and resurrection, are then further sanctified in a very real and personal way. Because of the virtue of Christ's death and resurrection and by his Word and Spirit dwelling in them, the dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed [*the era of sin's total control is ended*]. The different lusts of the body are increasingly weakened and mortified [*put to death, put away*] and Christ's people are increasingly quickened and strengthened in all saving graces,

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<sup>1</sup> Please, note this is the second of two articles on sanctification; the first article dealt with union with Christ and definitive sanctification; please see RT 268.

<sup>2</sup> James Clarke edition, pp 19,20.

to practise all true holiness without which no man shall see the Lord.

This sounds rather wordy but actually it is very succinct. It tells us that sanctification is God's work (we 'are sanctified' – something is done to us rather than we doing something); the context and means of it are our union with Christ in his death and resurrection; sin is progressively weakened (its dominion having been ended at conversion) and grace is increasingly strengthened. The end result is practical holiness without which there is no evidence that you are a Christian and you will not be saved.

Paragraphs 2 and 3 of this chapter tell us that this work is universal in your character – you cannot have bits of you untouched by the new birth – but not perfected in this life. In fact the Christian life and growth in holiness can be described as a battle – 'the flesh lusts [*makes war*] against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh' (see Gal 5:17). However the Confession concludes that 'through the continual supply of strength from the sanctifying Spirit of Christ, the regenerate part overcomes. And so the saints grow in grace, perfecting holiness in the fear of God; pressing after a heavenly life in evangelical [*not legalistic*] obedience to all the commands which Christ as Head and King, in His Word has prescribed to them.'

In other words – you win, because God is working in you, and you live an obedient (holy) life not out of mere duty but because you want to.

Such a life, we might add, is entirely natural, in terms of the new nature, to one who has been born of God and adopted as a child of God, and who loves his or her Father. It results in greater assurance and greater joy in the Christian life and in turn such assurance contributes to perseverance and to greater victories in the fight.

The end result is glorification – the final and consummating act of God in his people and the completion of his work in and for them.

Our approach to sanctification therefore should be, like the Confession, essentially positive, hopeful and joyful. Our greatest exertion will be faith – for it is our union with Christ that is the source of our sanctification, and faith rests on him and draws on his strength; but as we shall see that is very far from 'letting go and letting God'. True faith is seen by its working and its obedience.

This is a huge subject; it is almost equivalent to writing about the whole

Christian life. All I can do in one article is establish some foundations on which you can build.

### **A work begun**

Paul tells the Philippians that ‘he [that is, God] who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ’ (1:6). God has begun a process at conversion that he is not going to give up. It is a process begun at regeneration that will end in perfect holiness. That is the staggering promise of the gospel. In his first letter, John writes, ‘No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God’s seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God’ (3:9). Life cannot be kept down. Tree roots push up through tarmac roads and flagstone pavements; grass pushes up through concrete. How much more does eternal life win the day against the defeated forces of Satan, sin and death. At conversion you were transferred from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of Christ; turned from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God, and released from slavery to sin to become happy slaves of righteousness. You have also been born again of the Spirit, and it is this organic process that is continued in sanctification.

### **God is for you**

It is God who completes what he has begun – although as Philippians 1:6 reminds us, it is not complete until the day of Jesus Christ. As Paul also wrote to the Philippians, ‘Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure’ (2:12,13). For the Thessalonians Paul prayed that ‘the God of peace himself would sanctify you completely and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ’ (1 Thess 5:24). ‘God’ here refers primarily to the Father although each person of the Trinity is engaged in every work of God towards his creation. The Son sanctified himself so that we might be sanctified in truth (John 17:19). But above all sanctification is attributed to the Holy Spirit. We are saved ‘through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth’ (2 Thess 2:13); we are ‘elect exiles ... according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood’ (1 Peter 1:2). The Spirit convicts of sin (John 16:8); he guides us into all truth (v13), taking what is Christ’s and declaring it to us (v14). By his power we put sin to death (Rom 8:13). He guides us (v14) and by him we know and experience our adoption,



crying out, 'Abba! Father!' (v15). He helps us in our praying (v26) and intercedes for us (v27). He is grieved when we sin (Eph 4:30), he brings forth the fruit of grace in us (Gal 5:22,23) and it is he who transforms us from one degree of glory to another (2 Cor 3:18).

You will make no progress in sanctification, being made *holy*, unless you are filled with the *Holy Spirit*. But be encouraged. God is for you; he is at work in you. You need never fail for resources in the struggle.

### **But you are responsible**

The power and the resources come from God; his is the plan, his the initiative and his the completion of the work. But with every promise comes a command, and all the commands relating to sanctification, as in all other things, are addressed to us. 'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you' (Phil 2:12,13). God's work is not an invitation to leisure, but to striving in the fear of the Lord. As John Murray says, 'God works in us and we also work. But the relation is that *because* God works we work'.<sup>3</sup> Paul wants to see the Philippians' love abound more and more in knowledge and their being filled with the fruit of righteousness (1:9-11). Peter urges his readers to add virtue to virtue, not to be idle or unfruitful. Such exhortations abound (Rom 12:1-2 – '...be transformed by the renewal of your mind...'; or 2 Cor 7:1: 'Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God' (cf Gal 5:13-16, 25,26; Eph 4:17-32; 1 Thess 5:8-22; Heb 12:14-16 etc).

Sometimes, as in Ephesians 4:17-6:9, detailed instructions are given, fleshing out the general commands to obedience and holiness with practical instructions for many life-situations and to different classes of people – the young and old, employers and employees, children and parents, husbands and wives, and elsewhere, widows (1 Tim 5:3f), old women and young (Tit 2:3-5) or old and young men (Tit 2:2, 6-8). The message is clear: holiness is for every Christian and to be pursued in every situation.

### **Becoming who you are**

In any process, particularly involving intense struggle, it is crucial to keep your eye on the end result. Lose sight of your goal and the battle is half

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<sup>3</sup> *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* (Banner of Truth 1979 rep.) p 149.

lost. Some Christians are good on tactics – the detailed rules for dealing with individual situations or problems as they arise – but very poor on strategy – the bigger plan which keeps a firm eye on the desired prize. So some Christians make a point of obeying the law – usually in some areas in particular, even making up new laws to keep them ‘holy’ as they envisage it, but they have lost touch with other areas of the battle and with their final destiny. Usually this manifests itself in a list of ‘do’s and don’t’s’ and a joyless, dutiful religion. Others may live free from such things, and consider themselves liberated and loving. But they meanwhile have so ‘liberated’ themselves that they forget the very clear command to abstain from every form of evil (1 Thess 5:22).

Both extremes would be helped by a clear grasp of the ‘big picture’. What is sanctification aimed at? It is to be made holy. But this is not arbitrary, as if God dreamed up some impossible ideal for us. Holiness is what we were created for. We were made in his image, and first and foremost he is a holy God. Holiness is what was lost at the Fall, and every other aspect of the ‘image of God’ was affected as well. It is to be re-created in his image that God has called us and regenerated us. We are to be holy because God our heavenly Father is holy (1 Peter 1:16). We are created anew by him in his image, in true righteousness, holiness and knowledge (Eph 4:24; Col 3:10). We are not to be conformed to this world, but transformed by the renewal of our mind (Rom 12:1-2).

Above all, this means to be conformed to the image of God’s Son (Rom 8:29). This process has begun now, but it will be perfected when he returns. John writes, ‘Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is’ (1 John 3:2).

John then adds something very significant. What is the effect of this knowledge on the Christian life? ‘And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure’ (1 John 3:3).

The aim of sanctification is simply to become like Jesus. As you become like Jesus you are also becoming more truly yourself. Not an angel, for God has not created you or re-created you to be an angel, but something more wonderful yet – a redeemed, perfected human being. Sanctification is the process of becoming what God has called you to be. It is to become fully what he has started making you. It is to become what you are – and will be, when that is fully revealed.

Keep an eye on the goal, the big picture – conformity to Christ, renewal in the image of your Creator, a work already begun which will not be complete till he returns.

That should stop you getting lost in rules or losing touch with purity.

### **Reasons, motives and incentives**

Sanctification is long – a life’s work. It is also wide – every area of life is claimed by it, at home, in school, at college, at leisure, in church, with others, on your own. Further, it is deep – challenging the very depths of your being as God’s Spirit using his Word cuts between soul and spirit, bone and marrow, winking out the roots of sin from the deepest recesses of your heart. It is a struggle.

God, knowing our weakness, has therefore heaped up reasons, motives and incentives in spades in the Scriptures. In his excellent book *The Hole in our Holiness*<sup>4</sup> Kevin DeYoung takes three and a half pages to list some of them. For example, we should pursue holiness because it is right (Eph 6:1); because it follows God’s example (1 Peter 1:16; Eph. 4:32); and Christ’s example (Eph 5:2, Heb 12:1-3); to gain assurance (2 Peter 1:10); out of love for Christ (John 14:15); for an eternal reward (1 Tim 6:18,19); for our good (Eph 6:3, Deut 12:28); because of Jesus’ return (2 Peter 3:11-12); because the world is not our home (1 Peter 2:11); to win others to Christ (1 Peter 2:12); the example of the saints (Heb 12:1); we are created for good works (Eph 2:10); we have an inheritance of which we should live worthy (Eph 5:5f); from fear of judgement (Heb 10:26-31); what you have been in the past (Heb 10:32-36); in gratitude for grace (Rom 12:1); for the glory of God (1 Cor 6:19,20) – and so on. Just read Ephesians 4:17 – 6:9 to see how Paul weaves together instruction, exhortation and motivation as he teaches the Ephesian Christians how to walk worthy of the gospel in a pagan culture.

God does not leave it at ‘cos I say so’ – though he could. A multitude of reasons – from what he is, what he has done for us in Christ, what we are, what we have been, what awaits the righteous, what awaits the unrighteous, what we have received, what we are meant to be, and much else – are brought to bear on our minds as God reasons with us, encourages us, shames us and yes, sometimes warns us and frightens us into being what we are called to be.

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<sup>4</sup>Crossway, 2012; see pp 57-60.

## Resources are plentiful

Sanctification is a struggle. Titles of books on the subject bear witness to this – *The Fight, The Enemy Within, Licensed to Kill*.<sup>5</sup> We need power, and we need weapons. These are not lacking.

Our power is in the Lord. We are more than conquerors through him who loved us (Rom 8:37). ‘I can do all things through him who strengthens me’ was Paul’s testimony (Phil 4:13).

‘But I say, walk by the Spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh’ he instructs, and promises, the Galatians (5:16). ‘But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires,’ he instructs the Romans (13:14). ‘Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil’ he exhorts the Ephesians (6:10,11). Spiritual warfare is not a rarefied and occasional part of the Christian life; it is an integral part of it. You need to ‘take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm’ (6:13) *every* day, not just when you think Satan might be mounting a special attack.

How though do we access this strength and bring it to bear in our battle?

*First, through faith.* It is by virtue of Christ’s death and resurrection, firstly, that ‘the dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed’ as our Confession reminds us. That is, it is through union with Christ, and our union with Christ is strengthened and brought to bear on our lives through faith. In a very real way we are ‘sanctified by faith’, but this is not to be understood in a passive sense as if we ‘surrender’ to God, relax and leave it all up to him. Faith is ‘active resting’ on Christ and grasping the resources of grace in him to engage in the fight. It is not so much ‘let go and let God’ as ‘trust God and get going.’<sup>6</sup>

*Second, through prayer.* Paul concludes his enumeration of the spiritual armour with ‘praying at all times, in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication’ (Eph 6:18,19). You do not need to be told how important Paul regarded prayer to be (eg Col 4:2-4, and his own prayers for the churches).

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<sup>5</sup> See end of article for references.

<sup>6</sup> As I believe J.I. Packer says somewhere – perhaps in *Keep in Step with the Spirit*. (Intervarsity Press 1984).

*Third, the gospel armour itself* – the truth of God’s Word, righteousness, primarily that of Christ, the gospel of peace, faith as a shield and the helmet of salvation. This is what it means to ‘put on Christ’ (Rom 13:14).

*Fourth, the Word of God.* This is the only weapon mentioned in the spiritual armoury (Eph 6:17). The Confession says that as well as by the virtue of Christ’s death and resurrection, it is by ‘his Word and Spirit dwelling in them’ that the saints are sanctified. It was by the Word that Jesus himself warded off the temptations of Satan (Matt 4:1-11). It is by the truth (his Word) that we are sanctified (John 17:17). The Word teaches us about God and ourselves; the law defines sin; the gospel shows us the way of salvation; it leads us to Christ, cultivating hatred of sin and a longing for heaven.

*Fifth, the Church.* Yes – fellowship is a means of sanctification. We hear the Word preached together, we pray together, we care for one another, we forbear with one another, we forgive one another, we minister the Word to one another in rebuke or encouragement (Col 3:12-17). We learn to understand and bear with those with weak or strong consciences (Rom 14:1-15:7). Christianity is personal but it is also communal. The church is the crucible of sanctification.

*Sixth, the ordinances.* Baptism is the great sign of having put off the ‘old man’ and being cleansed from sin. The Lord’s Supper is a regular means of grace whereby we are strengthened for the race and the struggle.

### **Know your enemy**

In his helpful book *The Christian Life*<sup>7</sup> Sinclair Ferguson speaks of the ‘Christian’s conflicts’ with two outward enemies – the world and the devil – and an inward enemy – the flesh. The *world* is what we are ‘in’ but not ‘of’ (John 17:14-17). The world is full of things that are attractive to our appetites, senses and pride (1 John 2:15-17). Even things good in themselves can become ‘gods’ and lead us from Christ. Temptations abound. What is the world? ‘Whatever cools your affections for Christ,’ is a good answer. We have to be in the world and be thankful for God’s good gifts, yet also cultivate a detachment from it as Paul says (1 Cor 7:29-31). The world, as Jesus taught in the first of all parables, can choke weak faith (Matt 13:22).

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<sup>7</sup> Banner of Truth, 1981, rep 2013.

The *devil* is the source of sin and sorrow. He is dangerous (Eph 6:10-12; 1 Peter 5:8 – a roaring lion); he is deceptive, delighting in false teaching and leading believers astray (2 Cor 11:3,13,14); but remember, he is defeated (Luke 10:18, Heb 2:14, 1 John 3:8). Space forbids detailed discussion of his schemes<sup>8</sup> but stay close to Christ and his Word and you will have all the resources you need to defeat him (1Peter 5:9, James 4:7, Rev 12:11).

The inward battle meanwhile is against the *flesh*, ‘the whole man in his creatureliness, weakness and sinfulness ... human nature dominated by sin’.<sup>9</sup> Surviving (or remaining) sin in the Christian, says Ferguson, is not reigning sin but it is real sin.<sup>10</sup> The Christian is not ‘in the flesh’ (Rom 8:9) but ‘in the Spirit’, that is, dominated by Christ through the Spirit, not dominated by sin. Yet in his flesh sin remains and there is a war between this indwelling sin and the Spirit (Gal 5:17). Remember that Romans 6 has taught us that the ‘old man’ or ‘old nature’ is dead, and you are alive in Christ. This means that now you are able to wage unceasing warfare on the ‘body of sin’ that still remains in you. That body is dead, and is, as it were, without a Head, as you are no longer in Adam, but the battle with sin goes on till your dying day. This is what it is to ‘put sin to death’ (‘mortifying’ sin, as it is called – Rom 8:13).

### **Joining the battle – ‘be killing sin or it will kill you’**

Several books, let alone one short article, could not deal with this subject adequately, but some pointers may be given. How do I go about putting sin to death daily (Rom 8:13, Col 3:5)?

1. Remind yourself of the seriousness of sin. Read and understand Genesis 3; the Lord’s teaching in Mark 7:20-23; Rom 1:18-32, 3:9-20 and 7:14-25. Why this last passage? There are many good reasons for seeing it as applying to a Christian: Paul writes in the present tense, unlike vv7-13; he expresses approval of God’s law (vv14,16,22) which is not the way the New Testament speaks of unbelievers; he uses the phrase ‘inner self’ (v22) which elsewhere clearly refers to a Christian (2 Cor 4:16; Eph. 3:16); he hates evil (v15); he expresses the hope of final liberty (v25) and then concludes with a summary of his ongoing conflict – difficult to explain if he is already experiencing liberty from the conflict, or if chapter 8 is the

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<sup>8</sup> See *The Christian Life*, pp139-44 for helpful instruction.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid* p146.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid* p146.

‘way out’. No, chapter 7 tells us what the law reveals to us about our sin; chapter 8 is also the Christian’s experience from the perspective of the Spirit. Both are for all Christians at all times.

2. Remember that in Christ you have the victory (Rom 7:25, 1 Cor 15:57). Your death to sin and new life in God give you the immovable platform for the battle (Rom 6:12-14, 17-19). Do not be discouraged by failure. Satan would love you to despair. Faith never despairs. Look to Christ – consider him, who alone never failed, and do not grow weary or fainthearted (Heb 12:3).

3. Remember the resources you have – nothing less than God himself by his Spirit, his power and his Word. You are united to Christ. Stand firm in him (Eph 6:10-13).

4. Be well acquainted with the law of God. The Ten Commandments were not for Israel alone, they are God’s moral law for all time. Take account of how Paul and other apostles apply the law in their teaching eg Ephesians 5:3f, Romans 13:8-14; Galatians 5:19-21; Colossians 3:8-9.

5. Be specific about sin. Bring sin into the light of God’s presence. Take it to the light of the law but also to the light of the gospel – to the cross, and contemplate the cost of your sin to the Son of God and who loved you and gave himself for you. Rejoice in the promises of forgiveness and cleansing for those who confess their sin (1 John 1:9).

6. Recall the shame of past sin. ‘In these you too once walked, when you were living in them (Col 3:7). The memory of past sin is not to burden our consciences as if we were never forgiven them, but should remain in our memories to keep us humble, fearful of our weakness and slow to judge others.

7. Diagnose sin accurately. Is it habitual? Do you apply ‘cheap grace’ – forgiveness without repentance? Do you justify sin (‘I deserve this’; ‘it is only once’; ‘it is only a little sin’?) Are you fighting it, if at all, only for fear of being found out? Any motive is better than not to fight at all, but such reasons will fail in the end, for example when there is little risk of being found out (or so you think) by a human being. Remember God sees all. Has God begun to chasten you already? Have you been found out? Then be thankful – and listen. Do not despise the Lord’s chastening, or harden yourself against it (Heb 12:5-17).

8. Keep a firm grasp on your heavenly calling and your great hope – your ‘everlasting rest’. Sin looks different in the light of eternity. You are headed for a new heaven and new earth in which righteousness dwell, so what kind of people should you be (2 Peter 3:11-13)? Having this hope, of being like Jesus, we purify ourselves as he is pure (1 John 3:2,3).

## Glory

The end of the journey, and of the fight, is your eternal home. ‘But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself’ (Phil 3:20,21).

## Books

A grace-filled and Christ-centred treatment of sanctification is Walter Marshall’s *The Gospel Mystery of Sanctification* (reprinted by Reformation Heritage Books, 1999). On the battle for progressive sanctification, John Owen’s *Mortification of Sin* (84pp) is the classic, also available as an abridged paperback from Banner of Truth. *Temptation* and *Indwelling Sin* by Owen are also found in Vol 6 of his Works (by Banner of Truth).

Owen’s theology has been well summarised and made contemporary by Kris Lundgaard in *The Enemy Within* (P&R, 1998) and Brian Hedges in *Licensed to Kill – a Field Manual for Mortifying Sin* (Cruciform Press, 2011). Kevin DeYoung’s *The Hole in our Holiness* (Crossway, 2012) is very helpful as is Sinclair Ferguson’s *The Christian Life*, referred to above, though only three of its eighteen chapters are about sanctification. An older but still helpful book is John White’s *The Fight* (IVP, 1976 and 2008). Perhaps my favourite is still Jerry Bridges’ *The Pursuit of Holiness* (Navpress, 1978, 2006) which I have given to many a baptismal candidate.



## African Pastors' Conference News

The African Pastors' Conferences are making good progress in Southern Africa. Below is an overview of the conferences held during the months August – November 2015 with the number of delegates and numbers of books distributed at each.

COUNTRY	LOCATION	PROVINCE	NUMBER OF DELEGATES	BOOKS (SOLD AND FREE)
<b>Malawi</b>	Lilongwe		64	502
(August)	Karonga		46	211
	Blantyre		52	310
	Monkey Bay		25	93
<b>South Africa</b>	Muledane	Limpopo	22	282
(September)	Mbhokota	Limpopo	12	99
	Daveyton	Gauteng	19	188
	Soweto	Gauteng	27	257
<b>South Africa</b>	East London	Eastern Cape	47	429
(October)	Port Elizabeth	Western Cape	6	52
	Bloemfontein	Free State	26	361
<b>South Africa</b>	KwaMashu	KwaZulu Natal	29	243
(November)	Empangeni	KwaZulu Natal	24	376
	Mseleni	KwaZulu Natal	31	159
<b>Lesotho</b>	Maseru		10	82
			<b>94</b>	<b>3644</b>

Total books to date (sold and free) is **69798** being the minimum number of books distributed since the inception of APC in 2006.

The attendees are mainly pastors, elders or other leaders from local churches, though a few interested church members do occasionally attend. They come from theologically very different backgrounds and most of them are not familiar with biblical preaching or the doctrines of grace. Some of them have not been converted. Many of them are more used to the 'prosperity gospel' with its health and wealth teaching.

Three free books are given to each of the registered delegates who qualify as a Bible teacher. In one case these were *Liyini Ibandla Elinempilo* (a Zulu translation of *What is a healthy church?* by Mark Dever), *Expository Thoughts on Mark* by J C Ryle and *One World One Way* by John Benton. They were gratefully received.

These conferences are an amazing way to reach men to help them to preach and teach the true biblical gospel of Jesus Christ. The following quote is from the conference in Daveyton: 'The delegates were hungry for the Word of God and hung attentively onto every word preached. Most had a humble attitude, admitted that they badly needed teaching and begged for more.'

You or your church can sponsor one (or more) of these (mostly) annual conferences. At the moment about 11 conferences are being sponsored by a church or an individual in the USA or the UK. Approximately 50 conferences have been scheduled for 2016 and we hope to be able to meet this goal, God willing, as he provides the funding. Please see RT 261 or contact us for more details.

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## Update on the Founding Editor

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It is now more than two years since Erroll Hulse had a major stroke while in South Africa ministering with the African Pastors' Conferences. This has left him paralysed down one side and needing constant care. Throughout this time Erroll has, by God's grace, been able to maintain a constant ministry of intercession for the many kingdom concerns close to his heart. He and his family are deeply grateful to all who have prayed for him. Erroll has asked for New Year's Greetings to be sent to friends, and is happy for us to include his message here for our readers:

'I derive great encouragement daily from meditating on the Kingship of Christ, and in particular Psalm 2:8: "Ask of me and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession." In claiming the promises that all nations should be blessed through acknowledging the Lordship of Christ, I use that magnificent recourse Operation World. I love to pray for the different countries of the world, some of which I have had the great privilege of ministering in. I have especially precious memories of Swaziland, Botswana and South Africa. I would commend the work of the African Pastors' Conferences to your prayers at this time. Every blessing, Erroll Hulse.'

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## News

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### **Reformation Today Trust: New Chairman**

Our brother John Rubens has been involved with the ministry of the Reformation Today Trust almost from the very beginning in 1970. For many years he has served as the chairman of the Trust. At the recent meeting he announced he wished to step down as chairman and as a trustee. Following his earlier retirement as pastor of the Church in Newton Aycliffe, John is now living in Penzance, Cornwall, and feels called to serve the small Reformed Baptist constituency in that part of the UK in the coming years.

Hugh Collier, pastor of the Church in Great Ellingham, and, already a trustee, will take over as chairman of the Reformation Today Trust.

We express our profound gratitude to the Lord for all the wise counsel and hard work that John has contributed over many years and we wish him our Lord's blessing in this new phase of ministry. We also pray for God's help and guidance for Hugh as our new chairman. Hugh and his wife Lois are also managing the annual Carey Ministers' Conference as one of the ministries of the Trust.

### **Evangelical Fellowship of Congregational Churches (EFCC) meeting**

The EFCC are holding a Congregational Studies Conference at Wesley's Chapel, London, on 19 March 2016. The speaker will be Michael Haykin who will be speaking on Asahel Nettleton, Philip Dodderidge and Isaac Watts. More information can be obtained from their website with posters and booking form to follow.

### **Conference on John Owen**

*International Conference on 'John Owen: Between Orthodoxy and Modernity', Theological University, Apeldoorn, The Netherlands, 31 August – 2 September 2016.*

This international conference, co-organised by five universities from the Netherlands and Belgium, marks the 400th anniversary of the birth of the English Puritan John Owen (1616–1683). As a leading orthodox Reformed theologian he lived on the brink of a new age. Therefore his theology is

important for understanding the developing mutual relationship between orthodoxy and the modern context.

Further information from the website of the Theological University, Apeldoorn: <http://www.tua.nl/index.php?paginaID=182&archieff=agendastuk++>

## **Slovakia**

The following is an extract from a recent prayer letter by our brother Jan Sichula from Slovakia:

So let me finally share a little bit about what is going on here in our ministry as truly much is taking place. As far as our two regular branch Bible studies go, it now looks as if our Bible study group in Malacky might soon move to a local church that will start to meet for the Lord's Supper on Lord's Day evenings. With the Bible study in Palarikovo, the 10 months of meetings there were great but we now need to reconsider the strategy as the time might be ripe for a church plant similar to how the meeting in Malacky developed over the months. This will be a very serious decision, should it ultimately happen, and we need to pray a lot so as to discern what the Lord's plans are.

Independent of our efforts in Malacky and Palarikovo, I have been travelling a lot during the last several months to meet various sympathising believers across the country including some five times to the other end of Slovakia. In Kosice, which is the second largest city in Slovakia, there is a growing Bible study group that now meets approximately once a month. The Lord opened the doors for my involvement; so I travel there regularly to teach God's Word and to answer follow-up questions with both younger and older people meeting there.

In Bratislava, which is still our home and continues as the main focus of our ministry efforts, the Lord blessed us in August with a baptism of married couple Mirko and Valika who had been visiting us as seekers for more than two years. We also continue to be evangelistically active in Bratislava and in smaller towns fairly close to it and up to 30 minutes' drive from the capital and where intense commuting is the norm. Along this line we have endeavoured in the work of open-air preaching twice in the small town of Samorin that is located east of Bratislava.

## **Denmark**

Our brother Dr Ian Shaw from York is an emeritus professor of sociology at the University of York and is still active as professor in Aalborg, Denmark.

His visits to Denmark have led him to discover the presence of a small cluster of English and Danish-speaking Reformed Baptist churches.

In 2009 Kristuskirken (Christ Church), a Reformed Baptist church, was planted in Bjerringbro in the mid-Jutland area. In 2012 the church launched its first church plant extension, Nordkirken (North Church) in Northern Jutland, as part of the church's effort to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ in Denmark. The church holds to the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith and is also a member of the 9 Marks network of churches. More information about the church can be found at:

<http://onceuponacross.blogspot.dk/2010/12/kristuskirken-reformed-baptist-church.html>

The newly planted church in Nordkirken has a website in Danish (<http://www.nordkirken.dk/>).

There is a small international fellowship in Aalborg. The link is <http://www.koinonia-aalborg.dk/>

It is encouraging to know about these churches and they will value our prayer for them.

## **Nigeria**

Our brother Tony Okoroh sent us a report on some important events and developments in Nigeria. The following is a summary:

From 28 October to 8 November we welcomed friends from abroad who took part in ministry outreaches to students in Lagos State University (LASU), to prisoners in one of the prisons in Lagos State, to a city-wide radio audience through a local radio station EKO FM, and conferences in Abuja and Lagos under the theme: 'In the World but not of the World'.

### *Mission outreach at Lagos State University*

From Christ Bible Church, California, USA, we welcomed our dear friends Pastor Joe Jacowitz, Gerard Limtiaco, Dani Beshwati, and Ben Beasley. From Ephesus Church, Georgia, USA, came Pastor Nick Kennicott, and from Metropolitan Tabernacle, London, UK, came Tunde Odumala.

The Lord gave us a platform to organise the outreach at Lagos State University, though we are not students of the institution. Instead of a one-day rally, it became a three-day outreach with Pastor Joe speaking. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> day there was a major rally that saw over 300 people in attendance when Pastor Joe preached a message from Luke 16.

We rejoice in the Lord, seeing how he overruled all the difficulties and gave us the platform to preach the truth at this university. Please thank God for the wonder of what happened, encouraging the spread of the true gospel in a university campus 'abuzz' with false gospels of varied cultural emphasis.

### *2015 Lagos Bible Conference*

The 2015 Lagos Bible Conference was residential in a facility belonging to Living World Ministries on the outskirts of Lagos. This was one sure way to avoid the stressful Lagos traffic gridlocks that discouraged many attendees to previous conferences. Besides, this arrangement also allowed us more time for preaching, for group discussions with questions and answers, and fellowship. The conference ran from 5 – 7 November.

It was a refreshing time with deep spiritual exercise on the theme: 'In the World but not of the World'. Pastor Joe Jacowitz brought three messages: 'Worldliness; its meaning and danger'; 'The Church, the purchased possession of Christ'; and 'Flee Youthful Lusts'. Pastor Femi Popoola, who is a former graduate of Christ Church's Seminary, spoke on 'The Christian's holy calling', and Pastor Femi Sonuga-Oye of Sovereign Grace Bible Church, Lagos on 'Serving one Master'. Nick Kennicott gave two lectures on the topics 'The love of the Father versus the love of the world', and 'Guarding against worldliness at home'. Pastor Tony Okoroh spoke on 'The True gospel, the Foundation of True Worship'.

There were one hundred and fifty registered attendees and all received free books donated by Christ Bible Church. The messages are also available on the SGBC website: [www.SGBC.org.ng](http://www.SGBC.org.ng).

In all the messages the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ was powerfully set forth and believers were urged to see who and what we have been made in him and to consciously set ourselves apart from the anti-Christian systems of the world as a people who have been purchased at a priceless cost and brought into the holiest place.

Please pray that these messages may be used to call back the Church, especially in Nigeria, to the clear teachings of the Bible against worldliness. Pray that God may convict church leaders and pastors of all their errors in thinking and teaching that it is possible to be of Christ and of the world at the same time! Pray that the Lord will sustain the witness of the truth and strengthen his remnant in Nigeria and in every place.



*Sovereign Grace Community Church in Abuja, Nigeria*

Following these events another conference with the same theme was held in Sovereign Grace Community Church in Abuja. This was the first ever conference for the young church of ten families. Over sixty people attended and one of the attendees asked if this sort of conference could be held every two weeks!

Tony Okoroh ended his report with the following words: ‘Thank you for your continued support and prayers. The insurgency in the northern part of our country has become international, involving neighbouring nations and jihadists worldwide. Please pray that the Lord our God might keep us in the way and keep us steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in his work.’

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## The Children's Talk: Oh dear, that is tough!

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John Gibbens

**FIND TEACHING CHILDREN QUITE A CHALLENGE. I AM THE VERY LAST WHEN IT COMES TO KNOWING HOW TO DO IT. This is mainly because I rather feel that if I were a child, I would find it boring, taking into account the sort of materials that abound. Maybe I have not searched far enough?**

I tend to think laterally, quite normally. I then had to cope with that, their boredom and my own, plus the conviction that God is the very opposite of boring and the essential need to present God's truth to children. That meant prayer, rather desperately asking God what to do. This is a short survey of the result.

### **How to teach our nine-year-old son?**

We had been through excellent children's Bibles on the whole Bible and felt a bit stuck as to what to do next! Then I came across *A Catechism for Boys and Girls* by Erroll Hulse. It looked a bit tame, with a question, then answers with Bible references. If I were nine, I'd far rather play with guns and toy soldiers in a battle. Even a war between teddies and dollies was more interesting! I did not have what it takes to go through it like that!

When I was a child, after being dosed with stories, my interest was less on stories, more the theology.

I then prayed and was bothered about it. Then came a mad idea. I asked Erroll Hulse for his approval and did it. Er, not quite! I did it the other way around! First I scanned the whole book and turned it into a computer text file. I then removed all the answers and put them in a separate file. I gave our son a print out of the questions and Bible references and turned it into a quiz. I did not give him the answers. He had to work out the answers for himself from the Bible. I refrained from helping him. It was his job! We then discussed the answers.

It did not stop there! Our son went round enthusiastically putting the same questions to his mother and others and that started some very useful discussions all round. God blessed our whole family through this.

I suspect children at that age are interested far less in Bible stories. In all the years of ministry I have always found children seem to have more interest in



theology and the intriguing question and demand of ‘Why?’. A child will ask really penetrating theological questions. I am not sure how much they ask about stories. I wonder if they are thinking first and foremost about themselves and then ask about God, sin and all that theologically, whereas stories are far more removed from where they actually are. I then suspect we need to teach theology to children from a very young age. I am not good at stories, so talk about theology from when they are about three onwards.

### **The children’s talk at church in UK**

One Sunday I was visiting a church in the UK which asked me to do a children’s talk in the morning service! In Mongolia, where I normally minister, such does not exist. Horrors! What to teach them? Then, desperate prayer as I had no idea what to do. Then came an idea.

The children came to the front before me, some pretty young. I asked them: ‘Please tell me what nasty things you have seen other children do!’ At first, shocked silence! They were not being talked to, but asked to talk, and talk about their own life experience and about things which were maybe not quite ‘proper’ for a sedate church meeting! Then, bit by bit, they started to tell of the lies, spitting, biting, hitting. I then interrupted and asked them to instead talk of the nasty things they did! The result was far worse. Their enjoyment was obvious. I then asked, ‘Who taught you to do those things? Was it your parents?’ They denied it. ‘Was it your teacher or Sunday school teacher?’ Again, denial. I then was able to show them using *I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me* (Ps 51:5 NIV), that all people have a bad nature from conception which they cannot change. That is what sin means. Sin is our nature. What we do is natural to us.

The service continued with the adults. There was a sombre feel to it. We had all seen the horrors of sin told to us by children. We all felt shocked, really shocked! There was prayer and then I preached on repentance and salvation by the grace of God alone.

At the end of the service, one father came and said to me: ‘My seven-year-old daughter has just told me, “Daddy, I now know what sin is. It is my heart, my nature.”’ An older lady remonstrated angrily with me, saying all children are completely innocent. I replied, ‘They did not seem to think so! And that God had the opposite opinion, as shown in Psalm 51.’

### **Our son is now 16**

We do Bible study together. What I mean is that I get him to exegete and apply Scripture. We are right now working through John’s Gospel. We then discuss in depth and detail what it all means and how it fits with the rest of the Bible.

We have been concentrating on the overall analysis, that one major theme of the book is that of the prologue, that Jesus is in fact God in human flesh. 'I tell you the truth,' Jesus answered, 'before Abraham was born, I am!' (John 8:58 NIV).

We talked about YHWH being based on the root of the verb 'to be', the statements in the Old Testament of 'I AM' and that this means Jesus was stating his Godhead very clearly. We talked of the reason why the Jews refused him was that they refused to believe he is YHWH. They saw him just as a man. Yet, the end of the Gospel shows he is YHWH by his resurrection and ascension.

This year our son very much appreciated the speakers at the Banner of Truth Youth Conference, saying they approach the Bible as he has learnt it.

I am NOT the specialist in how to teach children. I feel entirely and hopelessly inadequate and utterly stuck! What I have to share is from that point of view. The search of a hopeless children's teacher for answers from him who has all the answers!

I once read part of a book of children's addresses by J. C Ryle. The first was the account of Elisha, the boys poking fun at him and how bears ate them, which he applied theologically! Ryle knew how to do it!

*Dr John Gibbens is a minister whom God sent to Mongolia. After language study and studying with Wycliffe Bible Translators, he first went there in 1972 when there were no believers, Bibles or other missionaries and when people literally had no idea at all of who Christ is or about the God of the Bible. He has worked with his wife Altaa on translating the Bible into Mongolian based on Hebrew and Greek. His PhD is in evangelical missiology, understanding and mutual misunderstanding, dealing particularly with conversion.*

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Further details about individual conferences are available from Phil Roberts (pr.il@tentmaker) or Frederick Hodgson (frederick.hodgson@gmail.com)

**CONTENTS**

- |   |                    |
|---|--------------------|
| <b>1. Editorial</b>                                     | Kees van Kralingen |
| <b>2. The Prayer that fetched an Angel</b>              | Nico van der Walt  |
| <b>6. Leslie Land: A Christian Ministry</b>             | Ian Shaw           |
| <b>18. Book review: The Korean Pentecost</b>            | Kees van Kralingen |
| <b>19. New books</b>                                    |                    |
| <b>20. Continuing a Good Work</b>                       | Mostyn Roberts     |
| <b>31. African Pastors' Conference News</b>             |                    |
| <b>32. Update on the Founding Editor</b>                |                    |
| <b>33. News</b>   |                    |
| <b>38. The Children's Talk: Oh dear, that is tough!</b> | John Gibbens       |