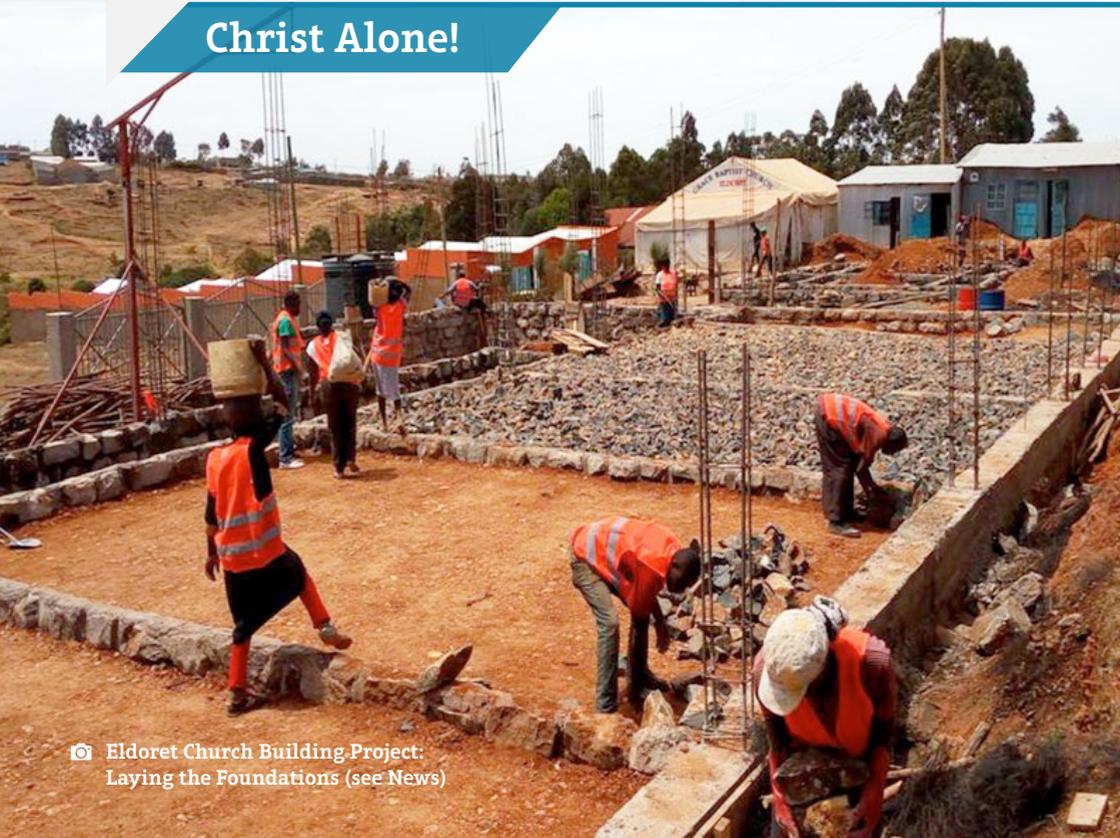


REFORMATION TODAY

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- ▶ The Conversion of Saul of Tarsus
- ▶ *Solus Christus*: The Witness of Thomas Cranmer
- ▶ Evangelicalism in England and Wales 1945 – 2015
- ▶ Forgiveness (part 3)

Christ Alone!





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Editorial

KEES VAN KRALINGEN

The original plan to dedicate this issue to the anniversary of the Reformation did not materialise in time; this plan is postponed until the next issue. Nevertheless, several articles in this issue do help us to think about the Reformation and the need for ongoing reformation of the church and of our personal, spiritual lives.

Christ is All in All

Paul says in Colossians 3:11 that 'Christ is all, and in all'. We cannot exhaust the deep and wide meaning of these words. Puritan Philip Henry wrote 41 chapters about this text; see the recent republication by Reformation Heritage Books / Soli Deo Gloria, entitled: *Christ All in All - What Christ is Made to All believers*. The author demonstrates that Christ alone can bring eternal happiness, and without him nothing else will do. To discover who Christ really is and what he wants to be for guilty, lost sinners is what Saul discovered on the road to Damascus as we read in the exposition of Acts 9 by Bob Davey.

Christ Alone

This has been the experience of all believers throughout the ages. An example was the Reformer Thomas Cranmer (1489–1556), the first Reformed Archbishop of Canterbury, who taught and preached that salvation is by Christ alone, as Michael Haykin describes.

Forgiveness

Having experienced God's grace in Christ and the forgiveness of all our sins inevitably must lead to a life in which we

forgive those who have sinned against us as our Lord himself taught us (Matt 6:14). Phil Roberts continues his series on this topic. The remaining two parts in this series are scheduled for the next two issues of RT.

Understanding our Times and Continuous Reformation

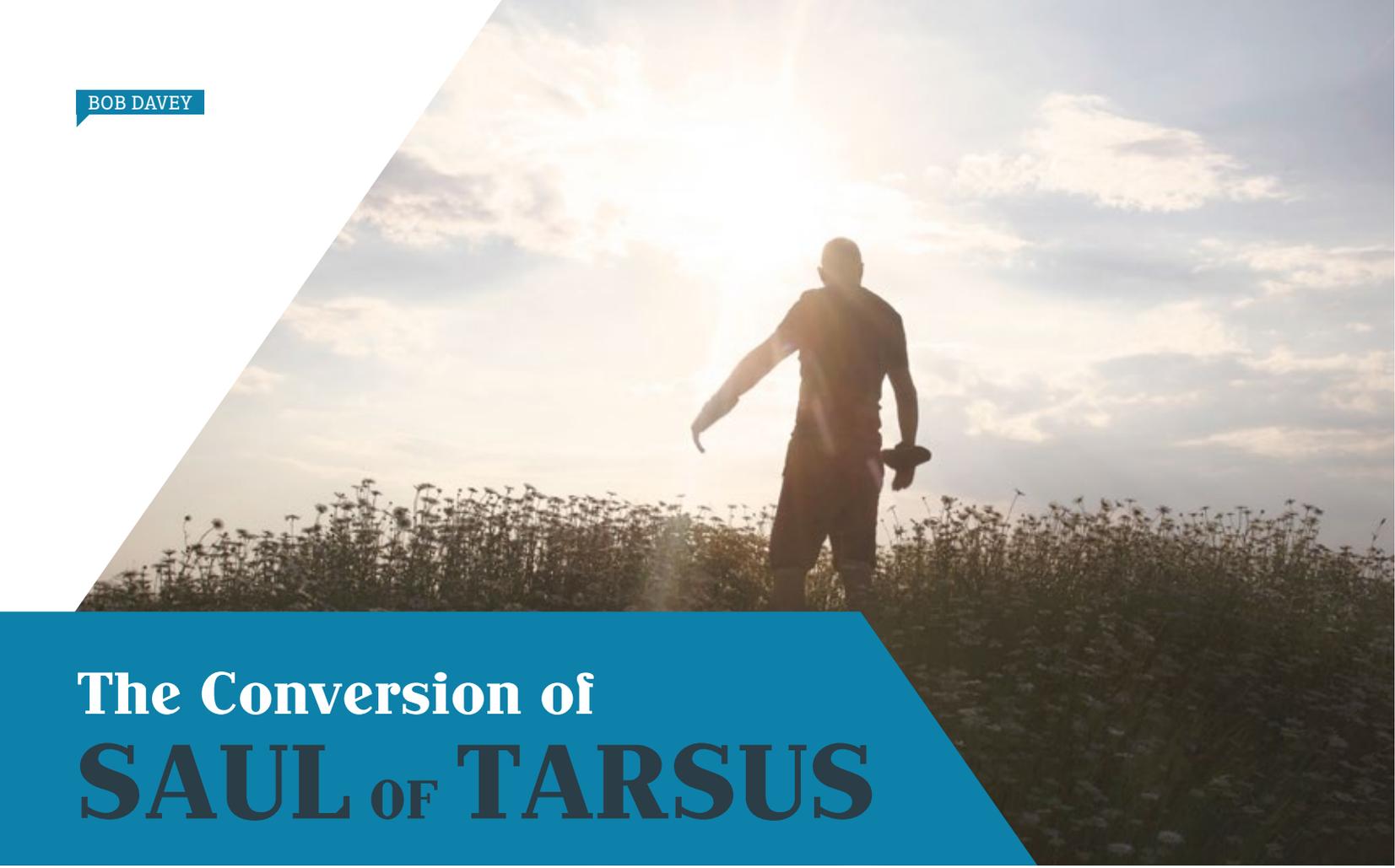
Paul exhorts young Timothy to understand the times as he says: 'But understand this, that in the last days there will be times of difficulty' (2 Tim 3:1). This leads Paul to charge Timothy also in the strongest possible words: 'Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching' (2 Tim 4:2). To do all this implies continuous reformation of the church and of our ministry. By God's grace, we have seen some of this over the period 1945-2015 as we can read in the article by Dr Geoff Thomas. Geoff first presented this as a paper at the last Westminster Conference in December 2016. We are grateful for being able to publish part of this in this issue of RT. The full paper will appear on our website.

As Geoff shows, confessional, evangelical Christianity has been challenged in a variety of ways in this period. These challenges have not remained unanswered, as he also indicates. As we look over the developments of this period, there is also plenty to encourage us and to keep us focused on the task, as Paul urged Timothy. Part of this is the wealth of resources now available to us. May the Lord give us grace and faithfulness to continue in the times ahead. ■

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The Conversion of SAUL OF TARSAUS

A STUDY IN ACTS 9:1-25

Saul's background

Saul was a Jew, born in Tarsus in the Roman province of Cilicia in today's South Turkey. He was the son of a Pharisee (Acts 23:6). He describes his background as follows: he was *circumcised on the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, concerning the law a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless* (Phil 3:5,6).

Saul of Tarsus was born both a Jew and a Roman citizen. Saul was his Hebrew name; Paul was his Roman, Gentile name. In the Acts of the Apostles he is called by his Jewish name, Saul of Tarsus, until he entered actively into his apostleship to the Gentiles. Then he is called by his Roman name of Paul (Acts 13:9).

Saul of Tarsus had a Jewish education and was taught the trade of a tentmaker

(Acts 18:1-3). Sent to Jerusalem to study under Gamaliel, Saul was trained thoroughly in the Jewish law (Acts 22:3), His testimony was, *I advanced in Judaism beyond many Jews of my own age and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers* (Gal 1:14).

There is no evidence that Saul saw Jesus during Jesus' earthly life, nor witnessed any of the events recorded in the Gospels. He was involved in Stephen's martyrdom (Acts 7:58; 8:1). He believed Stephen was utterly deluded and the worst of blasphemers (7:57). Immediately afterwards we find Saul persecuting the Christians (8:3).

Saul the persecutor (Acts 9:1,2; 22:4; 26:10,11; Gal 1:13)

9:1,2 Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

Saul became the persecutor-in-chief of the Christians. He attempted to root out Christianity root and branch. He was the most dangerous of enemies. He understood the principles, beliefs and lives of the Christians thoroughly and opposed them with a clear mind and obsessive hatred. They were a threat to all that he held dear. In his view the survival of Israel demanded suppression of heresy in order to keep the purity of the faith in Israel and God's favour along with it. Saul of Tarsus held an utter belief in his being right and the Christians wrong. As he saw it, he was doing God good service and

the Christians were God's enemies. With fanatical zeal, Saul obtained authority from the high priest at Jerusalem to extend his mission to Damascus, a city outside of the country. There he would bring back as many Christians as he could lay hands on to Jerusalem for trial. The Jewish community in Damascus would be called upon to help Saul in his mission.

A resurrection appearance of Jesus to Saul

9:3,4 As he (Saul) journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?'

On the road to Damascus Saul of Tarsus was converted when the Lord Jesus met with him in a resurrection appearance (Acts 9:3-9). Saul saw the risen Christ. This was not a vision, as was the case with Ananias and Saul later (9:10-16). A vision is something altogether different – having no objective reality outside the consciousness or mind of the person having the vision.

Later, Paul, writing to the Corinthians, says in his catalogue of the resurrection appearances of Christ, *Last of all, he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time* (1 Cor 15:8). All the resurrection appearances of Christ, except this one to Saul, happened in the 40 days between the day of resurrection and the day of ascension.

9:5 'Who are you, Lord?' 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.'

Saul was aware of heavenly authority. The power of God was at work. The answer Saul received shattered him. In a moment he knew that he had been totally in the wrong. Instead of being God's friend, as he had thought, now he knew he had been his enemy!

The full account of Christ's words to Saul on the road to Damascus is to be found in

The answer Saul received shattered him. In a moment he knew that he had been totally in the wrong. Instead of being God's friend, as he had thought, now he knew he had been his enemy!

Acts 26:14-18. Jesus also says: *'It is hard for you to kick against the goads.'* Saul's persecution of the Christians was futile. He would be the loser because he was fighting against the Lord Jesus, the one appearing to him with heavenly glory.

It was here, on the road to Damascus, that the Lord Jesus commissioned Saul personally to be the apostle to the Gentiles as we read: *'So he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what do*

you want me to do?" "Arise and go into the city and you will be told what you must do." There could be no resistance to this heavenly authority. It was Jesus in his risen glory. Saul submitted to him.

9:8 They led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus.

Saul was struck with blindness and helplessness by the heavenly glory of Jesus. He was led by the hand into Damascus.

9:9 And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

For three days, the conviction of sin within Saul was like that which King David had recorded in Psalm 51. In his prayer to God, King David said, *'Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned, and done this evil in your sight – that you may be found just when you speak, and blameless when you judge. Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.'* So intense was the conviction of sin in Saul that food and drink had no meaning for him. Saul the Pharisee was learning the lesson of the true nature and depth of sin within himself. For three days all that Saul had been, believed and done came under the honesty of true self-examination – under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

The conversion of Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9:10-19)

9:10 Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and to him the Lord said in a vision ...

In the vision to Ananias, the Lord Jesus gave him instructions to carry out. He also reassured Ananias about Saul because the mission of Saul was known to Ananias.

9:11 For behold, he is praying

Ananias' fears about Saul were put to rest by the authority of the heavenly vision and by the words of Jesus to him. Saul the Pharisee, who had said his prayers in the past, was now truly praying.

9:15 The Lord said to him, 'Go, for he is a chosen vessel of mine to bear my name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel.'

These words of Jesus must have struck Ananias with amazement but also joy at receiving yet another revelation of the wonderful grace and mercy of God in the Lord Jesus.

9:16 'For I will show him how many things he must suffer for my name's sake.'

In future, instead of being Saul the persecutor, he would be Saul the persecuted one. No doubt with a sense of wonder and worship, Ananias obeyed his Master and went to see Saul of Tarsus.

9:17 'Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.'

Ananias, knowing the hand of Jesus was on the life of Saul, embraces him as a brother. This would encourage Saul that all was well.

Through the message and action of Ananias (9:10-17), the Lord not only restored Saul's sight, he also saved Saul's soul and filled him with the Holy Spirit. By being filled with the Holy Spirit Saul received the full assurance of salvation as *the love of God was poured out into his heart by the Holy Spirit whom he has given* (Rom 5:5). It was like the prodigal son receiving his father's loving embrace (Luke 15:20).

9:18 He received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptised.

Saul's sight was restored. He insisted on being baptised without delay, before even eating any food. His priorities were right. A good start!

Saul at Damascus after his conversion (Acts 9:19-25)

9:19 Then Saul spent some days with the disciples at Damascus

Saul joined with the Christians in Damascus. We can only imagine the amazement and joy of the church in Damascus. It was here that Saul learned to truly humble himself and be 'less than the least of all the saints' (Eph 3:8).

9:20 Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.

Immediately Saul began to witness for Jesus the Messiah in the synagogues. The power of the Holy Spirit drove him on. Time was not to be wasted. He must put things right. He owed it to Jesus, the church and the people. Where better to witness for Jesus than in the synagogues 'that he is the Son of God'? There was to be no watering down of the message. Jesus is the Son of God, the living Saviour.

9:22 Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this Jesus is the Christ.

As Saul grew in experience in the work of evangelism, so did his effectiveness.

9:23-25 After many days were past, the Jews plotted to kill him. But their plot became known to Saul. And they watched the gates day and night, to kill him. Then the disciples took him by night and let him down through the wall in a large basket.

Saul's enemies were so incensed that they plotted his murder. This was the beginning of the sufferings 'for my name's sake' predicted for Saul by Jesus. With the help of his brothers in Christ, Saul escaped. For the next three years Saul remained in seclusion in Arabia (Gal 1:17,18).

We can never understand the later Paul and his ministry unless we get to grips with the fundamental and profound way his conversion marked him for life.

The permanent effects on Saul of Tarsus

We can never understand the later Paul and his ministry unless we get to grips with the fundamental and profound way his conversion marked him as a Christian man, as a servant of Jesus Christ and as an apostle and evangelist. His life became especially marked by five spiritual qualities. These spiritual qualities serve as a

good example for preachers for all time.

1. The first spiritual quality that marked Saul for life was an abiding conviction of sin with self-humbling.

The conviction of sin within Saul was so profound that the memory of it remained with him to the end of his life. It was towards the end that Paul says, 'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the worst' (1 Tim 1:15). Notice he does not say, 'of whom I was the worst' but 'I am the worst'. The memory of his past humiliating sin ever rose before him, humbling him. To Paul, he was *less than the least of all the saints* (Eph 3:8). This constant self-humbling drove him on to work harder than everyone else in proclaiming the unsearchable riches of Christ (1 Cor 15:10; Eph 3:8).

This self-humbling is a spiritual grace. As Saul was filled with the Holy Spirit and communed with his holy Father in heaven and with his holy Redeemer, who paid the price for his sin, his heart was being purified from sin by faith.

2. The second spiritual quality that marked Saul for life was an abiding sense of wonder and worship.

He never ceased to wonder and worship at the grace of God. Saul's conversion and call always filled him with gratitude and worship. *I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man ... now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen'* (1 Tim 1:12-14,17).

3. The third spiritual quality that marked Saul for life was that he became filled with divine love.

Love to Christ. Being filled with the Holy Spirit, Saul was filled with the love of Christ toward him, and filled with love towards Christ in return. *The grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus* (1 Tim 1:14). Now he knew what it was to really 'love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, and love your neighbour as yourself'. Saul now had religion as it was meant to be and was now a true son of Abraham (Gal 3:29). See how this love towards Christ showed itself immediately. 'He got up and was baptised'. Full of gratitude for

his salvation, Saul honoured Christ by obedience. Before even eating anything, he was baptised into the name of Jesus.

Love to the brethren. The love of Christ flowed out from Saul to the Christians, his new spiritual family, and from his new spiritual family to him. He was now

'brother Saul' (9:17,19). As he would write to the Thessalonian church, *Concerning brotherly love, you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another* (1 Thess 4:9). Saul was taught by God to love the brethren, from the very beginning.

Love to lost souls. The love of Christ flowed out from Saul to the lost for their salvation; *at once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God* (Acts 9:20). *The love of Christ compels us* (2 Cor 5:14). *Love seeks the good of others* (1 Cor 10:24). *We believe therefore we speak'* (2 Cor 4:13). *Since we know (have experienced) the terror of the Lord we persuade men [seek to save their souls]* (2 Cor 5:11). Love and urgency were the sources of his zeal in evangelism, which zeal he maintained to the end of his life. *Saul increased all the more in strength and confounded the Jews living in Damascus, proving that this Jesus is the Messiah* (Acts 9:22). Saul became as zealous to win souls for Christ as he had before been zealous to persecute the Christians. He now had a selfless, self-giving, sacrificial love, like his Master.

The Jews plotted to kill him (Acts 9:16, 23). The inevitable persecution followed.

HE NEVER CEASED TO WONDER AND WORSHIP AT THE GRACE OF GOD

Because his soul was burning with the love of Christ he bore all patiently and prayed for his enemies (Matt 5:44).

4. The fourth spiritual quality that marked Saul for life was that he became a man of prayer.

Ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying (Acts 9:11). Instead of praying like the Pharisee in Jesus' parable, Saul was praying like the tax collector (Luke 18:9-14). Afterwards, he cultivated prayer to his dying day. This is best illustrated from Ephesians 6. To be strong in the Lord, equipped with the spiritual armour effectively, Paul says that there is the necessity of continual prayer with the help of the Holy Spirit. *Pray in the Spirit on all occasions, with all kinds of prayer and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should* (Eph 6:18-20).

Pray for oneself – as one puts on each piece of spiritual armour.

Pray on all occasions – all occasions need God's blessing.

Pray with all kinds of prayer – mental, vocal, private, public.

Pray with alertness – prayer requires all our powers.

Pray for all the saints – and with the saints (understood).

Pray for preachers of the gospel and their ministry – for opportunities to declare the claims of Christ and God and have boldness and wisdom to use every opportunity fully.

Pray for the Holy Spirit to awaken and convert people.

Paul put all this into practice. He was a man who knew what it was to *pray without ceasing* (1 Thess 5:17). He was *faithful in prayer* (Rom 12:12).

5. The fifth spiritual quality that marked Saul for life was that he became a man of integrity.

Saul of Tarsus had *turned from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God* (Acts 26:18). *God is light and in him is no darkness at all* (1 John 1:5). Saul was now a child of light, walking in the light, a man of integrity and honesty. Deceit is not possible in the presence of Christ. Witness the case of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11). So it was integrity, as well as love, that drove Saul of Tarsus forward.

Saul of Tarsus became a man of conscience. To Governor Felix, Paul said, *'I strive always to have a conscience void of offence before God and man'* (Acts 24:16). To the same effect he spoke to the Sanhedrin (23:1). For his entire ministry Paul could say, *'We have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deceit, nor do we distort the word of God'* (2 Cor 4:2). What drove him forward was *love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and sincere faith* (1 Tim 1:5). Saul of Tarsus now lived in the light of the great day of judgment. 'My conscience is clear', he says, 'but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges

me. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time [the Day of Judgment] each will receive his praise from God' (1 Cor 4:4,5). 'The Day will bring it to light ... If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but yet as through fire [by the skin of your teeth] (1 Cor 3:13-15). Paul always lived with the Day of Judgment in view, even as a Christian.

Saul of Tarsus put things right as far as possible. The principle of restitution is a matter of justice. Zacchaeus, when he was saved, sought to make amends for his past sins immediately (Luke 19:1-10). It had to be done. It was only right. To put things right as far as is possible or wise is a fruit of genuine repentance. It is also part of the debt of love we owe to everyone. In five ways, Saul sought to put things to rights.

- » Saul was baptised immediately. He owed it to Christ. He had to make some amends for all the dishonour he had heaped upon that name. Before food was taken, he must be baptised into the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 9:18,19).
- » Saul joined the church, (9:19). Saul's second duty was to apologise, seek forgiveness and be reconciled to the church. This he did. It was the honest thing to do. He then took his place with the Christians.
- » Saul publicly preached Christ in the Jewish synagogues (9:20-21). It was a matter of putting a wrong right. He had blasphemed the name of Christ publicly, hating his very name, so he must put the matter right publicly. This he gladly did.

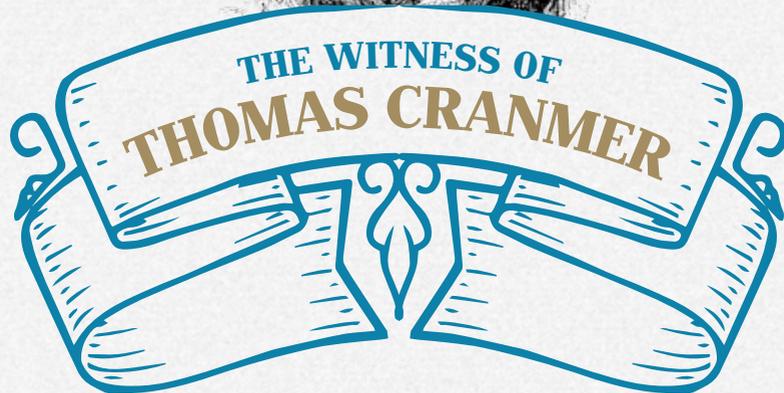
- » He who had been the persecutor joined the Christians in being persecuted. It was only right for him to do so. Thus Saul faced persecution humbly and without complaint, just like his Master and other Christians (Acts 9:23-25).
- » Saul put things right with regards to the martyr Stephen. Three years after his conversion, Saul appeared as an unknown in Jerusalem on a short visit to make the acquaintance of Peter and James the Lord's brother (Gal 1:15-24; Acts 9:26-30). We are told a very significant point about that visit. Saul preached the gospel in the same synagogues which Stephen had, the Greek-speaking ones. Why? Saul felt the weight of responsibility for his part in the death of the first Christian martyr, Stephen. It was a matter of honour and justice for him to put the record straight. No wonder his visit lasted only two weeks. But he had done the right thing. It was a matter of honesty and integrity. He was getting the sin of blood-guiltiness off his shoulders.

For about ten years Saul of Tarsus was out of view at Tarsus (Acts 9:30).

Saul's conversion is a testimony, a witness, for all time (1 Tim 1:16). His salvation stands as a witness to the greatness of God's mercy. If God could save Saul of Tarsus, no life is so sinful as to be beyond salvation. Also no life is so blighted as to be beyond usefulness in Christ's service. ■

Bob Davey is the pastor of Looe Christian Fellowship, having pastored FIEC churches in South London.

SOLUS CHRISTUS:



As a Calvinistic Baptist I owe a significant debt to early Anglicanism. My seventeenth-century forebears learned much of their Reformed theology from Reformed ministers in the Church of England and it was in the heart of that body that they were nurtured on the spirituality of the Reformation. And in the earliest days of that state Church no figure exercised as great an influence as the 'reluctant martyr' Thomas Cranmer (1489-1556), the first Reformed Archbishop of Canterbury.

Kenneth Brownell has argued that Thomas Cranmer's influence on the English-speaking Protestant world has been greater than any other figure except that of his contemporary John Knox (c1513-1572), and the eighteenth-century preachers George Whitefield (1714-1770), John Wesley (1703-1791) and Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758). 'Few men,' Brownell writes, 'did more to shape English Protestant spirituality and to drive into the soul of a nation the fundamentals of Protestant Christianity.'

Nevertheless, unlike these other figures, Cranmer is not at all an easy person to study or understand. Brownell's article bears witness to this: it is entitled 'Thomas Cranmer: Compromiser or Strategist?' What kind of man was Cranmer really? Was he an astute politician who accommodated himself during the reign of Henry VIII (reigned 1509-47), who made him Archbishop of Canterbury, until such time as he could promote church reform

without obstruction? Or was he a man out of his depth during the reign of Henry VIII, a man simply trying to stay alive as best he could?

The following essay sees him as one who eventually fully shared the common agenda of the other Reformers in Western Europe at the time, namely the Reformation of the church by exalting Christ alone as Saviour and that faith alone was the only way to know this great Saviour.

In the earliest days of that state Church no figure exercised as great an influence as the 'reluctant martyr' Thomas Cranmer (1489-1556), the first Reformed Archbishop of Canterbury.

Early life, 1489-1532

Cranmer was born on 2 July 1489, the son of Thomas and Agnes Cranmer, members of the lower gentry. His early schooling was not entirely satisfactory, but that did not prevent him from entering Jesus College, Cambridge, in 1503 at the age of 14. Here Cranmer was in his element. He was, as Brownell reminds us, 'fundamentally an academic'. Or as Geoffrey W

Bromiley has put it: 'To look at Cranmer is to see first the face of a scholar.' He became one of the most learned men of his age. His reading knowledge of foreign languages, both ancient and modern, included Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, as well as French, Italian and German. He was thus able, for instance, to translate the Hebrew Old Testament into Latin for his own personal use. In 1510 or 1511 Cranmer was elected a Fellow of Jesus College after having taken his BA degree there. And it was around 1520 that he became a priest.

Evangelical Christianity came to

Cambridge around the very time that he became a priest. During the early 1520s the Protestant cause was centred around meetings at the White Horse Inn in Cambridge led by such figures as Robert Barnes (c1495-1540) and Thomas Bilney (c1495--1531), both of whom died as martyrs. Scholars writing on the English Reformation in the past have tended to place Cranmer among this group. However, as Diarmaid MacCulloch has noted in his exhaustive study of Cranmer, this really amounts to a posthumous bestowal of membership. There is no evidence at all to place Cranmer among this group of early Reformers.

It was a conversation in 1529 with an important churchman, Stephen Gardiner (1483-1555), the Bishop of Winchester, that changed Cranmer's entire life. One of the topics of discussion on this occasion was what was quaintly termed the 'Privy Matter' of King Henry VIII namely his attempt to divorce Catherine of Aragon (1485-1536), his first wife. Catherine, a Spanish princess, had initially been married to Henry's older brother, Arthur (1486-1502). But Arthur had died in 1502 of what was then called 'consumption', which in his case was probably pneumonia. Henry was subsequently married to Catherine to maintain an alliance between England and Spain against France. After five unsuccessful pregnancies, Catherine gave Henry a daughter, Mary (1516-1558). But Henry desperately wanted a son. He feared that if he died without a son, England would be plunged again into a fratricidal dynastic war, like the one of the previous century known as the Wars of the Roses. This war had lasted on and off for thirty years (1455-1487) and had

only really ended when his father, Henry VII (1457-1509) wrested the crown from Richard III (1452-1485) at the Battle of Bosworth (1485).

A special papal dispensation had been granted to allow Henry to marry his brother's widow, but now Henry felt that this marriage was under God's curse because he could not have a son. And the more Catherine miscarried – she had a number of miscarriages after Mary's birth – the more Henry became convinced of the validity of his perspective. So began his quest for divorce in 1527.

Pope Clement VII (born 1478, pope 1523-1534), however, was unwilling to grant Henry's desire for a divorce. The reason was simple. In 1527, Clement had unwisely sided with the French against the Spanish and the Spanish ruler Charles V (1500-1558) – also the Holy Roman Emperor before whom Martin Luther (1483-1546) had stood at the Diet of Worms – had sent an army into Italy and sacked Rome and Clement had been forced to barricade himself in one of his castles. Catherine of Aragon was Charles' aunt and there was no way that the Pope was going to anger Charles again by shaming his aunt in the face of the whole of Roman Catholic Europe. So the Pope, and his papal legate in England, Cardinal Thomas Wolsey (1475-1530), stalled for time.

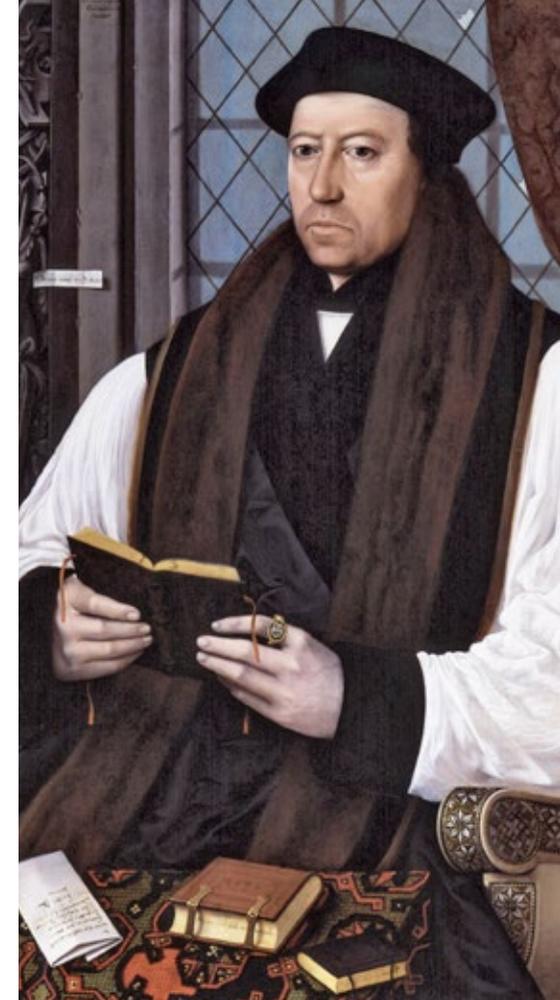
By 1529 Henry was losing patience. Now it happened in this conversation between Cranmer and Gardiner that Cranmer suggested that the case of Henry's divorce be put before the universities of Western Europe for the academics to judge the merits of it. Henry heard of this proposal,

loved it, and ordered Cranmer to draw up a treatise defending the rightness of his position. Cranmer went to live in London, and there he drew up a document that supported Henry's right to divorce. Cranmer was subsequently made a chaplain to the king as a result of this treatise and went from being an obscure scholar to being an up-and-coming player on the scene of national politics. In 1532 he was sent to Germany to represent Henry's case before Charles V. While Cranmer was on the continent word reached him of the death of the Archbishop of Canterbury, William Warham, in 1532. Cranmer was summoned home by the king to succeed him. Influential in this decision may well have been the woman who became his second wife, Anne Boleyn (c1501-1536).

Henry's Archbishop

Cranmer served Henry faithfully as his Archbishop. He was a strong supporter of royal supremacy throughout his career. 'He believed,' in the words of historian Jasper Ridley, 'that his primary duty as a Christian was to strengthen the power of the king.' Disobedience to a royal command was only permissible if carrying out the command involved a violation of one of God's laws. His view of church government was thus thoroughly Erastian. This would cause him much heartache in his career.

He thus actively participated in Henry's divorce of Catherine, which led to the formal break of the Church of England from the Roman Catholic Church and the declaration of Henry as the supreme head of the Church in England – what is known as the Act of Supremacy – in 1534. Catherine's daughter Mary never forgot,



nor forgave, Cranmer for his involvement in her mother being divorced. Although Cranmer was not involved in the marriage of Henry to Anne Boleyn, he did crown her queen in 1533.

Only three years later he presided over a second royal divorce. Anne had given birth to the child who would become Elizabeth I (reigned 1558-1603), and then a stillborn child, and Henry was still desperately seeking a son. Convinced that he had been wrong to marry Anne, he divorced her on trumped-up adultery charges and

had her executed. It is noteworthy that Cranmer did seek to save Anne Boleyn from the executioner. Later Cranmer also presided over Henry's divorce of Anne of Cleves (1540) and his divorce of Catherine Howard (1542).

The fall of Anne Boleyn and her subsequent execution for treason was a severe blow to Cranmer, for Anne was a keen supporter of the evangelical cause. As Diarmaid MacCulloch has noted, she had 'an informed enthusiasm for the contemporary French reform movement, and she was not afraid to draw Henry's attention to important early works of Protestantism in English.' That Cranmer was also an Evangelical in his sympathies by this time is seen from a letter he wrote on 27 April 1535 to Arthur Plantagenet (d1542), Viscount Lisle, an uncle of Henry VIII. Cranmer told Lisle that 'the very papacy and the see of Rome' is to be detested, since papal laws have 'suppressed Christ'; they have set up the Pope as 'a god of this world'; and they have 'brought the professors of Christ into such an ignorance of Christ.'

The fall of another key figure in the government, Thomas Cromwell (1485-1540), in 1540 provoked a further crisis for Cranmer, for Cromwell too had been a firm supporter of the cause of the Reformation. Cromwell's fall meant a triumph for the foes of the Reformed truth, chiefly Stephen Gardiner, the Bishop of Winchester, and Thomas Howard (1473-1554), the 3rd Duke of Norfolk, 'the most powerful and implacable conservative among the leading lay nobility'. Gardiner and Norfolk secured the passage of what is known as The Six Articles (1539) that, among other

things, reinforced the traditional doctrine of transubstantiation, clerical celibacy, and auricular confession. With this swing towards traditional Roman Catholicism Cranmer the Evangelical was in danger. Yet he survived. Why?

One clear reason is that King Henry genuinely liked him. In Christopher Catherwood's words: 'Henry found in Cranmer a rare man: someone he could actually trust.' A second reason was that Henry was not a traditional Catholic in his views. By 1543 he had all but rejected purgatory, and could look back on a career of destroying shrines and images with pleasure that he had done God's will. He also refused to believe that confirmation, unction, and ordination were sacraments. And yet, it is important to note that he never accepted justification by faith alone. And with the passage of the Act of Six Articles in 1539 Henry required clerical celibacy of all ministers in England. Cranmer acquiesced by sending his wife Margaret away to the continent. This leads to a third reason why Cranmer survived. Simply put, he compromised. His compromising can be clearly seen in the sending of his wife back to the continent and in his approval of the execution of the Lutheran preacher Robert Barnes in 1540. There is evidence that Cranmer was an unwilling player in all of this, but that does not remove his guilt.

The last years of Henry's reign – Henry died early in 1547 – were indeed a see-saw battle between the traditionalists and Evangelicals. But when Henry died in 1547, he left the Evangelicals, especially in the person of Edward Seymour (1500-

1552), the Duke of Somerset, the uncle of his son, the future King Edward VI (1537-1553), in an unassailable position to take over the reins of government.

Cranmer's prayers: a witness to *Solus Christus*

When Edward was crowned king by Cranmer on 20 February 1547, he was reminded by Cranmer that God was also giving him a spiritual sword as well as a temporal sword with which to rule. He therefore publicly urged him to remember that he was 'God's vice-regent and Christ's vicar' within the realm of England. He was to ensure that 'God [was] truly worshipped, and idolatry destroyed, the tyranny of the bishops of Rome banished ... and images removed. These acts be signs of a second Josiah, who reformed the church of God in his days.' There was now no hiding where Cranmer stood.

Cranmer's work in regard to the reform of worship is probably best seen in the Book of Common Prayer of 1552, which was intended to be the 'basis of Reformed Protestant worship,' and which, as Peter Toon recently noted, is 'a near perfect embodiment of the principle of justification by faith'.

One gets a marvellous insight into the heart of Cranmer's Reformed thought by looking at some of his written prayers. Consider this portion of a prayer from the Communion service in which Cranmer trumpets forth that salvation is by Christ alone:

'Almighty God our heavenly Father, which of thy tender mercy didst give thine only Son Jesus Christ, to suffer death upon the cross for our redemption, who made there (by his one oblation of himself once offered) a full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world, and did institute, and in his holy Gospel command us to continue, a perpetual memory of that his precious death, until his coming again; hear us, O merciful Father, we beseech thee...'

The declaration that Christ's death is 'a full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction' for sin undercuts the entire theological edifice of medieval Roman Catholicism.

The declaration that Christ's death is 'a full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction' for sin undercuts the entire theological edifice of medieval Roman Catholicism. For that edifice – with its understanding of the Mass as a re-sacrifice for sin, both that of the living and of the dead in purgatory, with its indulgences and rosaries and pilgrimages – was built on the supposition that humanity can do something to earn salvation and that medieval Roman Catholic piety

could help speed souls through purgatory. But Cranmer was convinced that all human endeavours to make appeasement for our sins and gain merit in the eyes of God are utterly futile. Due to the fact that, in Cranmer's words elsewhere, 'All men be sinners and offenders against God, and breakers of his law and commandments, therefore can no man by his own acts, works, and deeds ... be justified and made righteous before God.' Christ's peerless death is alone sufficient to appease the wrath of God against human sin and

cleanse those who put their trust in him from all unrighteousness.

Little wonder then that Cranmer was of the conviction that salvation by Christ alone and justification by faith alone is, in Cranmer's words:

'[T]he strong rock and foundation of Christian religion: this doctrine all old and ancient authors of Christ's Church do approve: this doctrine advanceth and setteth forth the true glory of Christ, and suppresseth the vainglory of man: this whosoever denieth is not to be reputed for a Christian man, nor for a setter forth of Christ's glory, but for an adversary to Christ and his gospel, and for a setter forth of men's vainglory.'

Here Cranmer identified what lay at the heart of the Reformation. The one side relied solely on the all-sufficiency of Christ's death – 'a setter forth of Christ's glory' he calls each individual in this camp. The other side, which denied this biblical truth, Cranmer is convinced cannot be described as Christian, but must be seen as opposed to Christ and 'a setter forth of men's vainglory'. Within a year or so of the publication of the 1552 edition of *The Book of Common Prayer* the unbridgeable gulf between these two sides would plunge England, and Cranmer personally, into turmoil and bloody strife.

Queen Mary I and England's 'reign of terror'

Edward VI died in 1553 of what is usually regarded as having been tuberculosis, though some recent scholarship has argued that he died of bronchopneumonia which had led to septicaemia. Before his

death it is now clear that he sought to ensure that the Reformation that his reign had initiated would survive. He thus changed the order of succession, away from both his half-sisters, Mary and Elizabeth, to a cousin, Lady Jane Grey (1537-1554), the granddaughter of Henry VIII's sister Mary. For nine days after the death of Edward, Jane was Queen. But Edward's 'dreams of founding an evangelical realm of Christ' foundered as his sister Mary seized power in a coup d'état and reigned as Mary I. Mary had been raised a fervent Roman Catholic and she passionately believed that if she eliminated the core leadership of the Evangelicals, the rest of England would docilely follow her back into the embrace of the Roman Church. She was dead wrong.

Estimates as to how many she burned have varied. Recent studies have identified 283 who were martyred. They ranged from bishops to brewers and barbers, from prominent preachers to teenage girls. Her brutal persecution – for which there was no precedent in England – ultimately discredited Roman Catholicism and when she died in 1558 of ovarian cancer, and her Protestant half-sister Elizabeth came to the throne, there was no popular regret at the realm becoming Protestant.

'God ... grant that I may endure to the end'

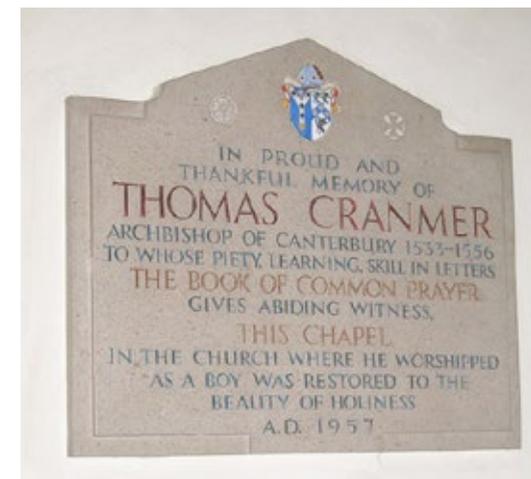
Now Cranmer had signed Edward's 'devise for the succession', which would have placed Jane Grey on the throne. Mary was determined he would pay for this and even more for his role in her father's divorce of her mother. Mary allowed Cranmer to give Edward a Protestant

funeral, but once that had been done, he was arrested. The charge for his arrest was based on his involvement in the proclamation of Jane Grey as queen. He was sent to the Tower of London on 13 September 1553. Two months later he was tried for treason and convicted. Mary loathed him and there was no possibility of a reprieve. He spent six months in the Tower of London, and then in April 1554 was taken to Oxford where he was submitted to a mock six-hour debate in the Church of St Mary the Virgin and in which he had little real opportunity to defend his views.

Even though Cranmer had been convicted, he languished in Oxford's Bocardo prison, because ultimately only the Pope could pass sentence on Cranmer, since he had been appointed Archbishop by the Pope. It was thus not until September 1555 that Cranmer faced trial with a papal representative in England. The trial was designed to secure Cranmer's admission of guilt and give him no opportunity to defend his views. The trial devastated Cranmer. On 4 December 1555, Cranmer was formally excommunicated by Pope Paul IV (born 1476, pope 1555-9).

Adding to his depression was the martyrdom of two of Cranmer's fellow bishops, Hugh Latimer (c1485-1555) and Nicholas Ridley (c1500-1555). They were burned at the stake on 16 October 1555 in what is now Broad Street, Oxford. Cranmer was compelled to watch their deaths from the roof of the Bocardo prison.

Meanwhile Cranmer was tortured and forced to undergo what today we would



call brain-washing sessions at the hands of a Spanish friar, Juan de Villa Garcia. By such means recantations were obtained that completely repudiated the theology of the Reformation that had motivated Cranmer as a Reformer. These private recantations, and there were six in total, were not enough for the authorities. Cranmer was informed that he would have to give a public recantation on the day of his being burnt by fire on Saturday, 21 March 1556.

That Saturday it was a cold, wet, windy March morning. Cranmer was taken from the Bocardo prison to the Church of St Mary the Virgin where he was placed on a raised platform in the full view of all who were there. He was once again berated for his heresies and then given the opportunity to speak where it was expected that he would repeat his earlier recantations. But by God's grace he was enabled to speak what he truly believed. Cranmer began with a prayer in which he confessed his sins and expressed his confidence in God's mercy. Then followed

what was expected to be his public recantation. It began with exhortations to the audience which included one to obey 'your King and Queen, willingly and gladly, without murmuring or grudging', but it ended in a way that was utterly unexpected. After stating his belief in 'every article of the Catholic [that is, universal Christian] faith' and 'every word and sentence taught' in the Scriptures he continued, though deadly pale, but with, as MacCulloch puts it, 'a surge of energy':

'And now I come to the great thing that so much troubleth my conscience, more than any thing that ever I did or said in my whole life: and that is, the setting abroad of writings contrary to the truth; which now here I renounce and refuse, as things written with my hand, contrary to the truth which I thought in my heart, and written for fear of death, and to save my life, if it might be; and that is, all such bills, which I have written or signed with my hand since my degradation: wherein I have written many things untrue. And forasmuch as my hand offended, writing contrary to my heart, my hand shall first be punished therefore; for, may I come to the fire, it shall be first burned. And as for the Pope, I refuse him, as Christ's enemy and Antichrist, with all his false doctrine.'

His opponents reminded him of his recantation. He responded, 'Always since I

lived ... I have been a hater of falsehood, and a lover of simplicity, and never, before this time, have I dissembled,' and he began to cry.

IN HIS FINAL HOURS GOD'S GRACE ENABLED HIM TO ENDURE TO THE END AND WE SEE THAT WHAT CRANMER HAD TAUGHT AS AN EVANGELICAL – NAMELY, THAT SALVATION IS WHOLLY THE LORD'S WORK – IS SHOWN TO BE TRUE IN HIS FINAL HOURS

He then literally ran to the stake in what is now Broad Street with the Spanish friar Villa Garcia running after him trying to get him to recant once again. The Spanish friar continued trying to get him to recant all the way to the stake, but Cranmer was steadfast and died confessing Christ.

Cranmer's legacy

The account of Cranmer's martyrdom is not one of unbroken triumph, but of victory being snatched out of the jaws of defeat. In some respects, Cranmer appears a very ordinary man, one with no taste for

violent death. But in his final hours God's grace enabled him to endure to the end and we see that what Cranmer had taught as an Evangelical – namely, that salvation is wholly the Lord's work – is shown to be true in his final hours. And out of his Reformed church came Puritanism, and from thence, the Calvinistic Baptist movement. ■

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HELP! I CANT FORGIVE



A SERIES OF STUDIES ON FORGIVENESS

THIS IS THE THIRD PART IN THIS SERIES; SEE RT275 FOR PART 1 / SECTIONS 1-3, AND RT276 FOR PART 2 / SECTIONS 4-5.

6. What of biblical cries for vengeance? Forgiveness and imprecation

There are certain passages in the Old Testament that some view as merely the utterances of men and not inspired Scripture. We find the imprecations, that is calls for God to avenge, troubling and embarrassing. What are we to make of them?

One of the psalms addresses the God of vengeance, Psalm 94.

A. A call to God concerning the wicked (vv1-3).

O LORD God, to whom vengeance belongs – O God, to whom vengeance belongs, shine forth! Rise up, O Judge of the earth; render punishment to the proud. LORD, how long will the wicked, how long will the wicked triumph?

Why does the psalmist address God in the way he does? What motivates the psalmist? In what way is God's vengeance to be displayed?

B. A description of the wicked (vv4-7)

They utter speech, and speak insolent things; all the workers of iniquity boast in themselves. They break in pieces Your people, O LORD, and afflict Your heritage. They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless. Yet they say, 'The LORD does not see, nor does the God of Jacob understand.'

What are the marks of the wicked given here? Why should the Lord be concerned? What is their attitude to God?

C. A warning to the wicked (vv8-11)

Understand, you senseless among the people; And you fools, when will you be wise? He who planted the ear, shall He not hear? He who formed the eye, shall He not see? He who instructs the nations, shall He not correct, He who teaches man knowledge? The LORD knows the thoughts of man, that they are futile.

What conclusions does the psalmist draw from God's attributes?

D. His confidence in general (vv12-15)

Blessed is the man whom You instruct, O LORD, and teach out of Your law, that You may give him rest from the days of adversity, until the pit is dug for the wicked. For the LORD will not cast off his people, nor will he forsake his inheritance. But judgment will return to righteousness, and all the upright in heart will follow it.

What is the source of rest for the righteous? What confidence do the righteous have concerning God?

E. His confidence personally (vv16-19)

Who will rise up for me against the evildoers?

Who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity? Unless the LORD had been my help, my soul would soon have settled in silence. If I say, 'My foot slips,' Your mercy, O LORD, will hold me up. In the multitude of my anxieties within me, Your comforts delight my soul.

What would the psalmist have experienced had the Lord not helped?

F. His confidence ultimately (vv20-23)

Shall the throne of iniquity, which devises evil by law, have fellowship with You? They gather together against the life of the righteous, and condemn innocent blood. But the LORD has been my defence, and my God the rock of my refuge. He has brought on them their own iniquity, and shall cut them off in their own wickedness; the LORD our God shall cut them off.

What is his view of the future? Where in the New Testament do we receive this assurance?

Here we see the psalmist praying for God's vengeance. Do you think this psalm merely records the prayer of the psalmist, or is it a prayer which God desires and so a model prayer? Sometimes the Scripture records the actions of believers without condoning them – is this such a case?

The Bible contains a number of such prayers (Psalms 35, 39, 109, 137, 139). Here is a sample:

LORD, in your anger; lift yourself up because of the rage of my enemies; rise up for me to the judgment you have commanded! So the congregation of the peoples shall surround you; for their sakes, therefore, return on high.

The LORD shall judge the peoples; Judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness, and according to my integrity within me. Oh, let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end, but establish the just; for the righteous God tests the hearts and minds (Psalm 7:6ff).

Remember this, that the enemy has reproached, O LORD, and that a foolish people has blasphemed Your name. Oh, do not deliver the life of your turtledove to the wild beast! Do not forget the life of your poor for ever. Have respect to the covenant; for the dark places of the earth are full of the haunts of cruelty. Oh, do not let the oppressed return ashamed! Let the poor and needy praise your name. Arise, O God, plead your own cause; remember how the foolish man reproaches you daily. Do not forget the voice of your enemies; the tumult of those who rise up against you increases continually (Psalm 74:18-23).

But I was like a docile lamb brought to the slaughter; and I did not know that they had devised schemes against me, saying, 'Let us destroy the tree with its fruit, and let us cut him off from the land of the living, that his name may be remembered no more.' But, O LORD of hosts, you who judge righteously, testing the mind and the heart, let me see your vengeance on them, for to you I have revealed my cause (Jer 11:19-20).

Lest we think this is only an Old Testament aspiration, consider this prayer – a prayer not uttered upon earth where sin still plays a part, but in heaven!

When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had

been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, 'How long, O Lord, holy and true, until you judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?' (Rev 6:9-10).

Significantly, the conclusion of the parable Jesus told of the unjust judge in which he exhorts us to pray and not lose heart is seldom stressed, but is highly significant in this context:

Then he spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart, saying: 'There was in a certain city a judge' ...

Then the Lord said, 'Hear what the unjust judge said. "And shall God not avenge his own elect who cry out day and night to him, though he bears long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he really find faith on the earth?"' (Luke 18:1-2, 6-8).

The judgment of the wicked is held out to believers as an encouragement and is found to be the subject of praise in heaven.

What are his own elect praying for?

We should beware of dismissing such desires as immoral when the righteous in heaven express them. Consider the words of R L Dabney, a 19th-century American theologian.

'Inasmuch as retribution inflicted by a creature is forbidden, the desire for its infliction by a creature, or pleasure therein, is also forbidden; but inasmuch as it is righteously inflicted by God, it must be right in him, and must therefore be, when in his hand, a proper subject of satisfaction to the godly.'

The judgment of the wicked is held out to believers as an encouragement and is found to be the subject of praise in heaven.

Since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power, when he comes, in that Day, to be glorified in his saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed (2 Thess 1:6-10).

And the twenty-four elders who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying: 'We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was and who is to come, because you have taken your great power and reigned. The nations were angry, and your wrath has come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that you should reward your servants the prophets and the saints, and those who fear your name, small and great, and should destroy those who destroy the earth' (Rev 11:16-18).

For true and righteous are his judgments, because he has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication; and he has avenged on her the blood of his servants shed by her (Rev 19:2).

If it is right for God to avenge himself and to render vengeance then it cannot

be unrighteous for men to desire this on God's part (where appropriate out of love of justice, truth and right).

There is such a thing as righteous anger. We are told to be angry and yet not sin (Eph 4:26). Injustice should upset us. We should have a holy hatred of sin, though a love for those bound in sin as its slaves. How are we to direct righteous anger?

We have noted that vengeance visited upon God's enemies is an aspect of salvation but, as we shall see in greater detail later, there is a time for vengeance and before that a day of grace. It is significant that when Jesus quotes Isaiah 61:1-2 in the synagogue in Nazareth he breaks off in mid-sentence. This is not to be understood as denying that vengeance will take place, but places the emphasis on his current ministry marked by grace:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he has sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord (Luke 4:18-19).

The original passage goes on to say: *To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn, to console those who mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he may be glorified (Is 61:2-3).*

It is right to appeal to the God of justice,

but this appeal must be with a desire for his glory. A desire for mercy arises in our hearts for we have received mercy:

You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, 'Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect (Matt 5:43-48).

Clearly there is a tension here. It is not wrong to desire the just recompense of an enemy who has assailed you as the injured party, but in such a case a close watch must be kept to ensure that the personal emotion, which is mixed with the impersonal, is not the motivation.

The final Day of the Lord is seen as the ultimate putting straight of the record.

Who is this who comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah, this one who is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? – 'I who speak in righteousness, mighty to save.' Why is your apparel red, and your garments like one who treads in the winepress? 'I have trodden the

winepress alone, and from the peoples no one was with me. For I have trodden them in my anger, and trampled them in my fury; their blood is sprinkled upon my garments, and I have stained all my robes. For the day of vengeance is in my heart, and the year of my redeemed has come. I looked, but there was no one to help, and I wondered that there was no one to uphold; therefore

my own arm brought salvation for me; and my own fury, it sustained me. I have trodden down the peoples in my anger, made them drunk in my fury, and brought down their strength to the earth (Is 63:1-6).

Now out of his mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it he should strike the nations. And he himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he has on his robe and on his thigh

a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS (Rev 19:15-16).

Retribution in the New Testament belongs essentially to the future world.

God's vengeance must never be viewed apart from his purpose to show mercy. He is not only the God of wrath, but must be the God of wrath in order for his mercy to have meaning (*Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, II, p.599).

'Vengeance is mine! I shall repay.' Thus speaks our God of that great day; Assuring those who have an ear, That all mankind has cause to fear. For everything though out of sight

IT IS RIGHT TO APPEAL TO THE GOD OF JUSTICE, BUT THIS APPEAL MUST BE WITH A DESIRE FOR HIS GLORY

*Will then be brought into the light
And judged with perfect equity,
By One possessing deity.*

*The poor beleaguered saint, whose cry
for justice God seems to deny
Will then see One arise and take
the stand and bearing witness make
The statement that the action done
Was counted as against that One,
Whom men now see upon a throne
And bowing down must sovereign own.*

*Dear saint, there may be in your view
Injustice rendered unto you:
Retaliation now restrain,
Render not evil back again;
But only love your enemy
Knowing God would have you be
His children, who while suffering here,
The goodness of their God make clear.*

This section may be thought to be strange to include in a book on forgiveness, but it is vital. Forgiveness is an act of faith, faith in the God of justice who rules a moral universe where wrong does not ultimately triumph. The great pressure we need to overcome in forgiving is the desire to inflict injury, whether physical or otherwise, upon those at whose hand we have suffered. To simply try and sublimate this may work for a time but is likely in the longer term to produce bitterness and other adverse psychological effects. As we have noted, many times those injuring us are beyond our reach, but none are beyond God's. The Bible presents us with an advocate to whom we may turn. We are to pour out our hearts to him.

**FORGIVENESS
TAKES
INJUSTICE
SERIOUSLY**

Every sin is paid for. Wrong is not simply swept under the carpet. Forgiveness takes injustice seriously. We who know God's salvation recognise that in forgiving us, God punished his only Son, our Saviour. Our sins were laid upon him that we should bear them no longer. The alternative was to bear them ourselves and face judgment leading to ultimate eternal damnation. Either way, sin is punished. As those who have known God's mercy, it is our desire that our enemies know this as well, but if not, that God is glorified in their destruction.

*Does not the potter have power over the clay,
from the same lump to make one vessel for
honour and another for dishonour? What
if God, wanting to show his wrath and to
make his power known, endured with much
longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared
for destruction, and that he might make
known the riches of his glory on
the vessels of mercy, which he
had prepared beforehand for
glory, even us whom he called,
not of the Jews only, but also of
the Gentiles? (Rom 9:21-24).*

Remember that judgments in time may well be used by God to bring people to seek him. We shall be considering later whether it is right to handover

to the authorities those whom we have forgiven yet are guilty of criminal acts.

Whilst Christianity is far from being alone in proclaiming forgiveness and presenting God as forgiving, it can be said that it alone provides the basis for how it is possible for God to forgive and remain just.

7. I'm hurting, I can't forgive! Forgiveness and providence

Injustice is not the only obstacle we have to overcome in forgiving, there is also hurt. We sustain personal injury. Our lives may be shattered and adversely affected for ever by the actions of others. We live daily with the pain and suffering, the heartache and sorrow. This can produce bitterness and anger. Whilst we may be affected by injustice done to another, hurt is something we experience because of wrong done to us. How are we to deal with this? Again, it is not enough merely to say that we must forget it – some hurts are so great, the damage so lasting that we live with the consciousness of them every day. A child is killed, we suffer abuse, emotionally we are scarred – in innumerable ways we bear the marks of the actions of others. We saw that in commanding us to refrain from avenging ourselves God gives us a key: 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay.' We will now study a second key, which also enables us to forgive: God's providence.

*And we know that all things work together
for good to those who love God, to those who
are the called according to his purpose. For
whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be
conformed to the image of his Son, that he
might be the firstborn among many brethren
(Rom 8:28-29).*

The confidence the believer has is that God is sovereign. He controls everything; the 'good' and the 'bad'.

*I am the LORD, and there is no other; there
is no God besides me. I will gird you, though
you have not known me, that they may know
from the rising of the sun to its setting that*

*there is none besides me. I am the LORD, and
there is no other; I form the light and create
darkness, I make peace and create calamity;
I, the LORD, do all these things. Rain down,
you heavens, from above, And let the skies
pour down righteousness; Let the earth
open, let them bring forth salvation, And let
righteousness spring up together. I, the LORD,
have created it. Woe to him who strives with
his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the
potsherd of the earth! Shall the clay say to
him who forms it, 'What are you making?'
(Is 45:5-9a).*

Whilst this is a terror to the unbeliever, it is a source of joy and comfort to the believer on account of God's promises. God is for the believer and so Paul concludes:

*What then shall we say to these things? If
God is for us, who can be against us? He who
did not spare his own Son, but delivered
him up for us all, how shall he not with him
also freely give us all things? Who shall
bring a charge against God's elect? It is God
who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It
is Christ who died, and furthermore is also
risen, who is even at the right hand of God,
who also makes intercession for us. Who
shall separate us from the love of Christ?
Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution,
or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?
As it is written: 'For your sake we are killed
all day long; We are accounted as sheep for
the slaughter.' Yet in all these things we are
more than conquerors through him who
loved us. For I am persuaded that neither
death nor life, nor angels nor principalities
nor powers, nor things present nor things to
come, nor height nor depth, nor any other
created thing, shall be able to separate us
from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus
our Lord (Rom 8:31-39).*

The believer rests in the sure knowledge of God's love, of his kind purposes, and ultimate plan for the believer. This is particularly illustrated in the lives of Bible characters, Job and Joseph. For Job, though his trials stretched his faith almost to breaking point, he acknowledged that all that happened to him was according to God's will.

Then Job arose, tore his robe, and shaved his head; and he fell to the ground and worshipped. And he said: 'Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.' In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong (Job 1:20-22).

Despite the fact that the calamities that had devastated Job were attributable to the marauding tribesmen, the Sabaeans and Chaldeans, the forces of nature, fire and wind, and all due to Satan's instigation, yet he attributes his experience to God. In all this he did not sin nor charge God with wrong. Job believed that God was sovereign in his affairs, what he did not know was why such things had happened. The book ends with Job's fortunes being restored and his being blessed more than he was at the beginning. He is also a wiser man from having gone through all that he did.

A second example is that of Joseph. Joseph's life was one of continual reversals. Raised in a home with older brothers, he is his father's favourite. Jealousy leads them to plot his death and this sentence is only commuted to being left to die in a pit. From there he is 'rescued', only to be sold to slave traders

on their way to Egypt. Sold into slavery to a high official in the court of Pharaoh, he proves himself faithful and reliable and is given authority over his master's affairs. But once again, there is a reversal in fortune when he is falsely accused by his master's wife which results in his being put in a dungeon. Once again his ability and trustworthiness means he is given authority within the prison. Two prominent prisoners, the Pharaoh's baker and cup-bearer, are confined with him and each has a dream. Interpreting these dreams, one of which indicates the release and restoration to office of the cup-bearer, Joseph requests that his situation be brought to the Pharaoh's attention. But the cup-bearer forgets, that is, until the Pharaoh has a dream that cannot be interpreted, at which point he remembers Joseph and tells Pharaoh. Joseph's interpretation of the dream results in his being placed in a position of authority in the land, second only to Pharaoh. So after so many reversals, Joseph is in a privileged position.

His life, however, had been hard; he was exiled from his home; his father thought him dead; and his brothers had never had to face up to the evil they had done. If anyone had reason to be bitter, then Joseph did. The famine Joseph had predicted in interpreting the dreams of Pharaoh brings his brothers to Egypt to seek food. They are brought before Joseph who immediately recognises them, but they have no clue that he is Joseph. Through a series of acts Joseph causes their consciences to awake and be troubled concerning their treatment of him. Eventually after they had visited him twice, he makes himself known to them.

His brothers are now completely in his power. No one is going to bat an eyelid if he commands them to be taken away and imprisoned, or even put to death. They are naturally terrified, but Joseph does not seek vengeance. Why not?

And Joseph said to his brothers, 'Please come near to me.' So they came near. Then he said: 'I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt. But now, do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life. For these two years the famine has been in the land, and there are still five years in which there will be neither ploughing nor harvesting. And God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt' (Gen 45:4-8).

Although the brothers had meant him harm – and he does not deny this nor seek to diminish their responsibility – he sees that God was providentially ordering all those events for his and their good. It is this understanding that enables him to act so kindly towards them and not seek to repay their evil with evil.

Having brought his father, Jacob, to Egypt, they settle in the fertile land of Goshen with their flocks and prosper. Eventually Jacob dies, and this causes his brothers once more to fear that Joseph will take vengeance.

When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, 'Perhaps Joseph will

hate us, and may actually repay us for all the evil which we did to him.' So they sent messengers to Joseph, saying, 'Before your father died he commanded, saying, "Thus you shall say to Joseph: 'I beg you, please forgive the trespass of your brothers and their sin; for they did evil to you.'" Now, please, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of your father.' And Joseph wept when they spoke to him. Then his brothers also went and fell down before his face, and they said, 'Behold, we are your servants.' Joseph said to them, 'Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive. Now therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones.' And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them (Gen 50:15-21).

Here Joseph again assures them that he has no intention of avenging himself as he sees God's wonderful providence in bringing it all about. Not only do we see Joseph free from holding a grudge and refusing to avenge himself, but we see him exhibiting genuine love in providing for his nephews and nieces.

There is, however, a significant addition: Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? This is not merely a rebuke to them for bowing down to him as though he were God, but is rather to remind them that they must deal with God over their sin. Human forgiveness does not absolve from sin. Joseph is in effect saying, 'You have no need to fear meeting me one dark night down by the side of the pyramids: I will do you no harm. But you must deal with God as what you did to me was evil in his sight.'

This last point is very important if forgiveness is not to degenerate into cheap grace. When a victim announces on TV that they have forgiven those who have committed some dreadful crime, it is often unspoken, but needs to be stressed, that God will call them to account. It is not just with the victims that the perpetrators of an injustice must deal but with God whose law they have broken.

When we get hold of this truth of God's wise providence, it will liberate us from bitterness. Why should we become bitter with those whom God has used for good? But you say, 'It was easy for Joseph, he was on a throne, living in privilege in the land; I'm in a dungeon because of what has happened to me!' This is where faith comes in. What has God promised us?

Predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son... (Rom 8:29).

Nothing ... shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom 8:39).

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away,

(to be continued in the next issue of RT)

Phil Roberts is pastor of Hartshill Bible Church, Stoke-on-Trent, UK.

reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time (1 Peter 1:3-5).

We may not currently be in a palace, but we will be, and are already spiritually:

Human forgiveness does not absolve from sin. Joseph is in effect saying, 'You have no need to fear meeting me one dark night down by the side of the pyramids: I will do you no harm. But you must deal with God as what you did to me was evil in his sight.'

And raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Eph 2:6).

Those who are against you can have no power over you except God wills it and, if he so wills it, it is for a good purpose.

The LORD is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me? (Ps 118:6).

It is not the instrument that determines the outcome but the hand that wields it.

*With mercy and with judgment
My web of time he wove,
And aye the dew of sorrow
Were lusted with his love:
I'll bless the hand that guided,
I'll bless the heart that planned
When throned where glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's land.*

Anne Ross Cousin (1824-1906); from Samuel Rutherford. ■

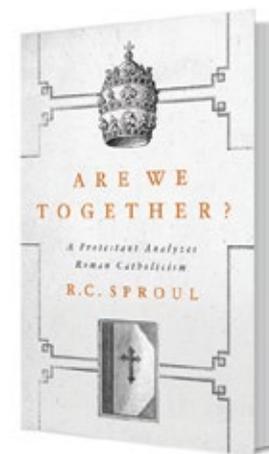
JOHN PALMER

Book Reviews

Are We Together?

A Protestant Analyses Roman Catholicism

Author: R C Sproul
Publisher: Reformation Trust
Pages: 126
ISBN: 978-1-56769-282-2



This is an essential read, in this 500th year since the Reformation began. The Pope has declared that the Reformation is over! Really – I didn't realise it was his Reformation to close down as he pleases! No, it is God's Reformation: but entrusted to those people whom God has saved by his grace: the true church of Jesus Christ. What are we doing with it? Are we going to let it die of neglect, or cowardice? Do we believe in 'Reformation Today' as the continuation of the work founded under God by Martin Luther 500 years ago?

R C Sproul has done us a great service. This is a book by a Protestant which consists mostly of Roman Catholic teaching! For in the spirit of Ephesians 5:11, he exposes the unfruitful works of darkness and urges us to take no part in them. He does this by giving us official Roman statements, which are still authoritative today, and

then demonstrating from the Bible itself and Protestant confessions how these oppose Scripture on fundamental issues about salvation, life and authority.

So here is Rome's teaching on tradition as an equal and secondary source of truth alongside Scripture. Here is the Roman heresy that we are saved by imparted, not imputed, righteousness clearly exposed. Here is the Roman Church, still taught as the true church, and all others as not real churches at all.

Moreover, here are the clear heresies that are outworkings of these. The 'sacrament' of penance, is described, whereby those who have sinned after baptism get multiple second chances to save themselves by doing works prescribed by a priest. The RC Church still believes in indulgences, whereby time in their



invented purgatory is shortened. It was the selling of these, of course, that led Luther to protest in terms which led directly to the Reformation.

The Mass, too, with its crass physicality of transubstantiation, is still taught in the same terms as 500 years ago. If it were true, would it not be cannibalism? Children in the UK are told that they will be 'eating Jesus'.

Here also we have the papacy, where a man claims to be the infallible source of teaching, rather than the Bible which

popes so often contradict. Finally, we have described the worship of Mary as the co-redemptrix together with Christ, and co-head of the church.

Rome is still wrong on all the big issues of authority and salvation, and the nature of the church. People who follow its teaching are still in darkness, not the light of Christ. It is still an offence to God. We are not, and cannot be 'together' with it in any sense. Let us preach the Bible's teaching concerning these doctrines clearly this year, and every year, to the glory of God! ■

the ecumenical movement. In fact, as the subtitle shows, the target in the author's sights is churches which have abandoned the Protestant Reformation ways in practice or in doctrine to try pragmatically to gain more adherents to their cause. His argument is that what we need is what I would call 'The Faith to be Reformed' in the light of this. He speaks mainly to the American situation, but of course American influence is felt throughout the world. If you don't know what to make of what is going on in America in terms of Christianity, read this book.

The second criticism is acknowledged by the author. All of Professor Wells' books are seen by some as long on analysis but short on answers. However, if told that a marsh is full of pits and dangerous snakes, perhaps one does not need so much instruction on what to do. Just don't go there, and pass the warning on!

This is where the book is useful. It describes – horrifyingly – the emptying of doctrine from supposedly Protestant churches in pursuit of success. It describes, sadly, how many are seeking – not necessarily deliberately? – to build what is not in fact the church of Christ but the church of men. They have gone astray in the realms of truth, the doctrine of God, of Christ and of the self and of the church. They have abandoned in practice, or ceased to teach the great doctrines of the Reformation: the authority of Scripture, justification by faith alone, in Christ alone, salvation by grace alone, giving glory to God alone, not our own spiritual comfort.

Most Americans claim to be born again. Yet most of these do not believe in original sin. They do not claim that their faith is the most important issue in their lives. They do not agree with the Bible's teaching about sin, nor do they seek to live holy lives. All this is documented by their responses to surveys on these issues.

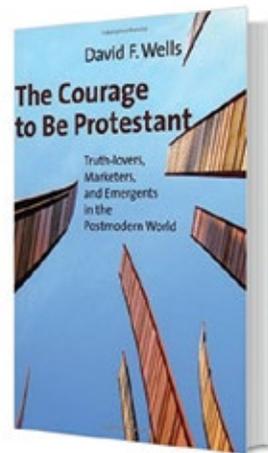
In the year that we celebrate 500 years since the Reformation began, such people will not be seeing its relevance. *Sola Scriptura; Sola gratia; Sola fide; Solus Christus; Soli Deo Gloria* maybe – but faith as an intellectual or emotional momentary experience, not as an eternal self-commitment to Jesus the Lord.

What should we do? Here are some answers:

- » Read this book.
- » Grieve over the wreck of evangelicalism in America, and where it has influence in the world.
- » Believe with all our hearts the God-exalting and man-humbling Reformation truths.
- » Preach them.
- » Live them out.
- » Pray for God to bring a new reformation where all the churches that this book describes are swept aside, as the Roman church was in many parts of Europe 500 years ago, by the cleansing wind of the Holy Spirit, so that the pure gospel is preached in all its fullness across all the world in our day. ■

The Courage to be Protestant:

Truth-lovers, marketers and emergents in the post-modern world



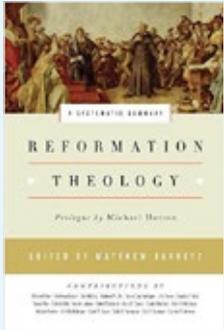
Author: David F Wells
Publisher: IVP
Pages: 248
ISBN: 978-1-84474-278-3

This is a good book, so let's get the criticisms out of the way at the beginning! There are two.

The first is the main title. You might expect this to be a book which opposes the Roman Catholic system of doctrine, or

New Books

GEOFF THOMAS



Reformation Theology

A Systematic Summary

Author: Matthew Barrett (ed.),
Publisher: Crossway, 2017
ISBN: ISBN 978-1-4335-4328-9



About this book (text from the Publisher): Five hundred years ago, the Reformers were defending doctrines such as justification by faith alone, the authority of Scripture, and God's grace in salvation – some to the point of death. Many of these same essential doctrines are still being challenged today, and there has never been a more crucial time to hold fast to the enduring truth of Scripture.

In *Reformation Theology*, Matthew Barrett has brought together a team of expert theologians and historians writing on key doctrines taught and defended by the Reformers centuries ago. With contributions from Michael Horton, Gerald Bray, Michael Reeves, Carl Trueman,

Robert Kolb, and many others, this volume stands as a manifesto for the church, exhorting Christians to learn from our spiritual forebears and hold fast to sound doctrine rooted in the Bible and passed on from generation to generation.

Matthew Barrett (PhD, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary) is tutor in Systematic Theology and Church History at Oak Hill Theological College in London, as well as the executive editor of *Credo Magazine*. He is the author of several books, including *God's Word Alone*, *Owen on the Christian Life*, and *Salvation by Grace*, and the series editor of the 5 Solas Series (also published by Crossway).

Other New Books

■ Joel R Beeke, *Revelation* (Reformation Heritage Books, 2016) ISBN 978-1-60178-457-5. Published in the series *The Lectio Continua, Expository Commentary on the New Testament*.

■ Stanley D Gale, *Finding Forgiveness. Discovering the Healing Power of the Gospel* (Reformation Heritage Books, 2016) ISBN 978-1-60178-502-2

EVANGELICALISM

— IN ENGLAND AND WALES —



Editor's note: This article is an abridged version of a paper given by the author at the Westminster Conference in London, in December 2016. The author used five main headings in this paper:

1. Three movements that have affected Evangelicals during this time.
2. Three outstanding personalities of this period.
3. Six challenges to Confessional Evangelical Christianity.
4. Two delusions avoided in evangelism.
5. Ten encouragements for today's gospel Christians as we face the next 70 years.

This article only covers the introduction and items 3 and 5. The full version will appear on the *Reformation Today* website. Reproduced with permission from the author.

I have been requested to provide a survey of evangelical life in England and Wales since 1945, offering my utterly unbiased (!) opinions concerning men and movements that have, on the one hand, encouraged the revival of historic Christianity during my lifetime, but on the other hand mentioning those who in the name of evangelical religion actually have not helped it. The end of this exercise – my giving this lecture today – was that we will all better understand our times, or at least understand how one elderly Welshman sees things. The promise that is implicit in this paper of a man getting up and putting the record straight of how we have got to be where we are today fills any Christian with excited anticipation. When I told

my family and friends of this December engagement they were enthusiastic, 'Oh I want to hear that.' The execution is bound to be something rather different.

This subject necessitates the speaker making the broadest generalisations. He will have blind spots, overlooking what are to others the most obvious personalities, movements and influences ('how could he say nothing about such and such?'). Then there is the fear that we're going to get a chronicle of pessimism and negativity. Only a very wise and modest man, or a vain fool, would agree to attempt such an overview, knowing he will probably live with the guilt of conference disappointment for the remainder of his life. This is no unfamiliar experience for him. Every minister here is thinking, 'Rather him than me.' But I've always enjoyed having ministers in my audience as those most sympathetic and appreciative of a fellow preacher who has to inspire and illuminate a congregation of mere believers week after week. How little any of us know of the spread of the kingdom of God. I will be reminding you of the obvious, I am afraid, but I will also try to be positive. We are here today at this annual conference, most of us characterised by our deep love for historic confessional Christianity, for the men and movements who have left their mark on us, and there are tens of thousands of others just like us all over the land. How did they appear? Where did they come from? From whence this hunger? We can't keep up with the arrival of great books year after year. How has that come about? Fascinating forces are at work. We don't gather as

You see immediately the ploy of the god of this world in labelling a movement who opposed all the progress of the Reformation, the Puritan period and the Great Awakening as a movement of enlightenment!

despairing men from our two nations of England and Wales in the year of our Lord 2016. We may not and cannot say that the

former days were better than these, and certainly we may not be despondent when we are looking across our borders to other parts of the world.

The year 1945 is an interesting year to choose as the starting line of this survey. I remember it well. I was seven and recall VE Day, the celebration bonfires, the street teas. The war had ended. I lived in a large town and I did not know of any gospel pulpits there. Certainly the church I attended never preached the gospel of Christ to me as I was growing up. The churches were

fuller than today, but there is a clean way to hell as well as our own dirty way. The year 1945 is approximately a couple of centuries after the beginning of that period in intellectual history known as the Enlightenment. You see immediately the ploy of the god of this world in labelling a movement who opposed all the progress of the Reformation, the Puritan period and the Great Awakening as a movement of enlightenment! The proud suggestion was that all the poor suckers which opposed it were unenlightened, blind, ignorant people. For two centuries Enlightenment psychologists – academics, economists, psychologists, poets, scientists and even theologians – opposed the love of God in Jesus' saving work, and they denied the authority and truthfulness of the Bible. They proudly anticipated all the extraordinary things that the human mind could accomplish if it were

increasingly set free from bondage to religion. Intellectual autonomy was the goal of the Enlightenment, and of course that movement was nothing really new. It was the same attitude that the apostles were meeting in Greek philosophy almost 2,000 years ago, and that the Reformers also met in Renaissance humanism fifteen centuries later, and that Evangelicals will always meet to the end of the age wherever people have made man's thinking the measure for knowing origins, moral values and human destiny. 'Who needs salvation from sin? What relevance has "redemption" to enlightened men and women? We are not sinners. We decide what sin is and we know that we're not guilty of it.' That was the attitude of the Enlightenment.

1945 is an arbitrary date picked by committee men that is willingly taken up by me, I select it quite arbitrarily as the year of the rise of another intellectual movement which moved from Enlightenment's modernism a step further down to what is known as 'post-modernism' or post-Enlightenment. Rudolf Bultmann was then proclaiming that Christianity must come to terms with the Enlightenment. One of his claims was that one couldn't believe in angels and demons if one used a telephone or flew in a plane. He never explained where the connection lay between those two. They never do. Bultmann is now gone and knows better, but his attitudes are still with us – as anyone who listens to the BBC Radio knows. But what we have today is the powerful legacy of the Enlightenment, but now as it is viewed through the lens of post-Enlightenment or postmodernist attitudes. The postmodernists are academic leaders who have separated themselves

from the more cerebral attitudes of pure Enlightenment by acknowledging that the intellect isn't everything. They declare that human brain power alone can't discover final or absolute truth. They give a place to intuition, and the affections, and the feelings, that these things, they teach, have an important place too. The Enlightenment was sceptical about the supernatural and the miraculous, while the postmoderns claim that they appreciate the preternatural. They value the contributions of Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, Celtic religion, and Brazilian tree spirits. An Archbishop of Canterbury may not commend substitutionary atonement but he will commend the meditative techniques of yoga. Psychic phenomena are also commended, astrology, channelling and past-life regression – all are considered as acceptable paths to truth.

Does this mean that the postmoderns are more open to the Bible than the moderns were? Are they more favourable to the idea that the Son of God came to earth in human history by a virgin birth, that he taught with absolute authority, that he said nothing wrong, that he raised the dead, the winds and waves obeyed him, that he lived a sinless life and gave himself as a sacrifice to appease and placate the anger of a sin-hating God towards all those that the Father had given to him to seek and save? Are postmodernists willing to bow the knee before him, the 'risen from the grave on the third day' Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ, the only Lord and Saviour of men, our only mediator with God? Not at all. Under their skin they, too, are Enlightenment men. They don't want to bow the knee to anyone, but especially will not bend the knees of their minds by chaining every one

of their thoughts captive to our Saviour, the Son of God. So until 1945 (give or take a few decades each side of it) moderns followed the autonomous secular intellect, but the postmoderns after 1945 subsequently added their claim that they had the right to follow their own affections and intuitions. They could accept odd beliefs such as yours and mine, and smile condescendingly and nod at your own experience and testimony to trust in Jesus Christ, though they reject your interpretation of it. They accept all kinds of views by their own credulous criteria. They believe what they believe on their own authority. They are utterly repudiating the idea of absolute truth. What is the word that so recently, on 16 November in fact, was named as word of the year by Oxford Dictionaries? It was the word 'post-truth'. The consequences of coming to accept that undermines the foundation of civilised interaction and a nation and society governed by law. If whatever anyone says is to be distrusted, then our futures are grim indeed. Man's god is found within himself, not the God of the Bible, but the god of man's own inner feelings, the god that is his own inner self. That then is the huge background, against which, since 1945, evangelical Christians have lived, their children received state education, their fancies tickled by the TV they watch, the marriage counselling they receive, the denominational seminaries that their preachers have attended and been instructed in. We are constantly being confronted by Enlightenment and

We are constantly being confronted by Enlightenment and postmodern attitudes. We are confronted in education, and marriage counselling, and in the newspapers and publishing houses in our European society, by an ethos where the self is worshipped.

postmodern attitudes. We are confronted in education, and marriage counselling, and in the newspapers and publishing

houses in our European society, by an ethos where the self is worshipped. We live in an age, where man's feelings are magnified and trusted, where we are urged to go with the flow. Such attitudes have had an enormous influence upon evangelical Christianity. How often have I preached reminding the congregation, 'Your feelings didn't die for you. Your repentance didn't rise from the dead for you. Your faith isn't interceding in heaven for you and saving you to the uttermost. That is Christ. Have no hope in anything but him. Your conscience is no safe guide as to what you're to accept and believe. Consider the conscience

of the cannibal. This same Lord Christ, the Son of God, taught a doctrine of Scripture, that it cannot be broken, and God's Word is truth. He quoted from the Old Testament and said, "It is written . . . it is written . . . it is written." The infallible Christ has spoken and offered to the world an infallible Scripture.' However we regard the waves that have been caused by individual men, their books and movements, the tide we are constantly resisting is that of the Enlightenment and postmodernism. Our conviction is the surrender of all the Protestant denominations to Enlightenment values, the way they sold historic, truthful Christianity to the unbelief of the Enlightenment is the reason for the unbelievable extraordinary decline

of the faith in this period, 1945 through 2016, though for the same period of time before 1945 the gospel foundations had been undermined, and the battle to the death with secular values is vigorously being fought today. How many evangelical students enter denominational seminaries to leave them three or four years later as Enlightenment men?

Let us proceed by first considering:

Six challenges to Confessional Evangelical Christianity

1. The so-called 'new perspective' on the teaching of the apostle Paul

In a book entitled *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* by Ed Sanders which appeared forty years ago the thesis was promoted that the Jews of Pauline times were not a legalistic, works-oriented community. They were men who considered themselves saved by being God's chosen, covenant community, the children of Abraham, and their remaining in the covenant depended on their keeping the law. Law-keeping was the badge of covenant membership. James Dunn and N T Wright were among the leaders who developed and modified and popularised this idea for ministers and theologians, not that it has ever become either a simple teaching affecting the praying of the mid-week meeting or being turned into hymnology.

The New Perspective claimed that the apostle had nothing negative to say about human effort and works. It claimed that when Paul writes of being justified by faith he did not mean flying from our sins and our works to trust in Christ's life and death, but rather our being declared righteous by our faithfulness to God's covenant

requirements, and that the day of judgment would be a day of vindication for those who have been faithful. The focus of the preacher then moves from exhortations to trust in Christ's blood and righteousness for salvation to exhortations to go on living faithfully, just as Christ did. This approach is commonly linked with infant baptism as an ordinance putting the child into the family of God, and thenceforth instructed to keep being faithful to him. This emphasis on being saved by faithfulness has brought the movement into common ground with Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox teaching on justification. It is an emphasis on a linear process of life-long justification rather than in an act of entrusting oneself to Christ in punctiliar justification. Teachers who have propounded this view in American Presbyterian seminaries have gained a following amongst some students, but have been dismissed from their callings.

2. The teaching of Karl Barth, or dialectical theology, or neo-orthodoxy – it's the same thing

Barth was a prodigious writer with a fine turn of phrase and some remarkable observations. He rejected the moralistic conclusions of German rationalistic theology. Christianity was far more than exhortations to live a bourgeois lifestyle. Good, but Barth didn't accept most of Scripture as a historical record, rather the majority of it was 'saga'; he did not believe in the resurrection as a fact. He also regarded Scripture as the exclusive way God reveals his word, existentially, to us. In other words, he had no place for God's general revelation in creation and conscience. Barth seems to have been universalist in his theology; all men are in

Adam, but all men are also in Christ. When I once heard him lecture in Princeton in 1963, that was what I gleaned. He was not easy to understand. That must be the case if you are at the most cool, as he was, to such basics as the law/gospel distinction and reject covenant theology. We must ask this, that if the theology of Karl Barth and his followers is what it claims to be – the 20th century rediscovery of the word, that it was God’s gift to those who stand in the pulpit – then where are the Barthian evangelists and preachers who have adopted this theology and thus have renewed dying churches and powerfully evangelised England and Wales, let alone in Germany and Switzerland?

3. The rejection of substitutionary atonement

The Baptist, Steve Chalke, infamously described the preaching of the cross as ‘cosmic child abuse’. The Church of Scotland minister, Scott McKenna, posted on his web a video of a sermon he preached in which he says, ‘I was asked if Jesus died for my sins. I replied, “No, no, no, no. That’s ghastly theology. You don’t want to go there.”’ What for us evangelical Christians is the very heart of the gospel, that Christ the Son of God became the Lamb of God who died for our sins according to the Scriptures and that he was buried, and that he rose again from the dead according to the Scriptures – the preaching of the cross – is for those men some dreadful teaching that should not be heard in any pulpit. It is in fact for them anti-Christian, and they claim to be Evangelicals.

4. The Openness of God

This teaching is also known as ‘open theism’ or ‘free will theism’ or ‘openness theology’.

It is the belief that God does not exercise meticulous control of the universe but leaves it ‘open’ for humans to make their own independent significant choices by their free will. Such decisions then impact their relationships with God and their neighbours. Open theism is the belief that God has not predetermined the future. He does not know the future exhaustively. Openness theology acknowledges that God is omniscient, but it rejects the inference that this means that God knows everything that will happen.

Open theists like Clark Pinnock argue that people are created to be in meaningful relationships with God and their fellow men, and as moral beings they must have the ability to make real, responsible choices in their lives. This, they claim, cannot be accomplished as long as God is believed to be exercising exhaustive control of the universe, or that he predetermines the future, because this would remove man’s free will. However, we have to ask if open theism is actually, truly reflecting the full teaching of the Bible. Is this what you learn from the life of Joseph or the death of the Lord Jesus? If God is not exercising meticulous control of the universe, reaching to the fall of sparrows or numbering the hairs on our heads, and if he does not exhaustively know the future, then surely Jehovah cannot be said to be in total control, and we’re not able to completely trust in God’s loving omnipotence in the hundred little things that happen to us hour by hour. How much hangs on little things! The big question remains, will the God of open theism actually triumph over evil? Open theists answer these critiques lamely and inconsistently by noting that while God doesn’t exercise meticulous control, he is somehow ‘ultimately’ in control.

5. Feminism

There are terrible ways in much of the world today in which women as the ‘weaker vessels’ who are half the human race are treated from the time they are infants and mutilated, on to the time they are taken as child brides, and then on into being abandoned when they are worn out with work and a new younger woman is taken into the home. The plight of a billion women on this planet is outrageous and we Evangelicals are to address that sin on every kind of mission field.

My concern with feminism is where it clashes with divine revelation and so I remind myself and you all that the church is the body of Christ. It is not the body of the Enlightenment or the body of the world. It has to register and assert its head’s personal convictions. For us he can say no wrong. We are to teach that woman was made in the image of God, by a separate act of creation, from man, and after man, and for man, to be his helper. She is equal to man in creative honour, in native depravity and redemptive privilege. Marriage is the union of a man and a woman, with their becoming the heads of any children God gives to them, man being the head of the woman, Christ being the head of the man, and God being the head of Christ. The church has to reflect that headship-reality in its structures and services. God does not gift one single man so that he can bear a child in his womb or nurse a child at his breast. God gives that privilege exclusively to the woman. God also discriminates by giving to man alone the privilege of preaching the Word at

God has prescribed for us how he is to be worshipped. Your taste might be to things Gregorian, or to things contemporary, or Celtic or cowboy. But your taste is not the issue; rather what does God require of us?

designated services. When that is denied by a woman who is actually leading and governing the congregation as the pastor-preacher then for that time, in that activity, in that congregation, it is not being the body of Christ. Christ’s body on earth is ruled by male elders. Our resistance to British feminism is also due to its intimate link with lesbianism.

6. The dumbing down of worship

God has prescribed for us how he is to be worshipped. Your taste might be to things Gregorian, or to things contemporary, or Celtic or cowboy. But your taste is not the issue; rather what does God require of us? He has made it plain; there is to be prayer, and the singing of psalms, hymns and spiritual songs (of which, incidentally, there is little example and not much emphasis in the New Testament), the preaching of the apostolic word (of which there is much emphasis in the New Testament), the enjoying of apostolic fellowship, the receiving of our offerings, the Lord’s Supper, baptism, and being in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day. There may be all sorts of minor variations and combinations of these elements but there may not be an abandonment of any of these things, nor an absolutising of any one of them to distort what gives pleasure and glory to God. A larger crowd may be gathered if certain things are done differently, but that is a great price to pay for grieving and quenching God the Holy Spirit. Such hymn books as *Christian Hymns* have put the church into their debt

by gathering the best hymns from 3,000 years of Christian doxology and making this praise available and attractive to our generation. We can sing on Sundays a psalm of Moses written 3,400 years ago or a hymn written recently by Vernon Higham.

Ten encouragements for today's gospel Christians as we face the next 70 years

These are great days to serve the God of the universe and the Lord of redemption. These are the days the Lord has made. On a material level – and we dare not ignore that, when one definition of true religion and undefiled before God is to be caring for orphans and widows in their affliction – materially we are witnessing the greatest improvement in global living standards ever to take place and how much of this can be ultimately traced back to the influence of the Bible? Poverty, malnutrition, illiteracy, child labour and infant mortality are falling faster than at any other time in human history. Polio and other diseases have virtually vanished. Life expectancy at birth increased more than twice as much in the 20th century as it has done since the time of the patriarchs. The risk that any individual would be exposed to war, die in a natural disaster, or be subjected to dictatorship has become much smaller than at any other epoch. A child born today is more likely to reach retirement age than his forebears were to attain their fifth birthday. What we are witnessing in such places as Syria and in North Korea are the exceptions where once tyranny had been an international rule. Johan Norberg's book *Progress: Ten*

Reasons to Look Forward to the Future (Oneworld Publications, 2016) is an important volume. Let me give you some of my own reasons for gospel encouragement.

1. *Modern English the first world language*

Modern English is the first world language, the most widely used language in newspaper publishing, book publishing, international telecommunications, scientific publishing and religious publishing. There is this remarkable juxtaposition, that English is both the world's gospel language, but also it dominates scientific research. It is the language most often taught as a foreign language. A working knowledge of English is a requirement in such vocations as medicine, computing and preaching. 80% of all scientific articles and journals are written in English. 90 % of all religious publications are written in English. It is the language for wide communication all over the world.

2. *Books*

I said to a friend who preaches, lectures, publishes and travels all over the world. 'What a vast number of good evangelical books are appearing each year. It must be something like one each day.' 'No,' he replied, 'It is two a day.' Of course that includes children's books, specialist books, commentaries, church history – but literature you would not be ashamed to have on your shelves. That fact of about 750 new trustworthy books being printed each year (and the number is increasing) is one barometer of the British and international vitality of evangelicalism (I would also

That fact of about 750 new trustworthy books being printed each year (and the number is increasing) is one barometer of the British and international vitality of evangelicalism.

add to the number of books the scores of magazines available).

3. *The worldwide web*

The web is a horrible cesspit where unspeakable brutality and sensuality is recorded and made available to children. That is a barometer of man's depravity. But also the web is full of gospel sites, preaching and information that can help every Christian. It has scores of sound sermons on each chapter of the Bible. A new great awakening of religion breaking out anywhere in the world would be immediately accessible on line internationally just days after it had begun.

4. *Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones*

There is no end to the influence of his publications, observations, evangelistic earnestness and summons to holy living. Being dead he still speaks.

5. *The international scene*

Look around you; talk to travellers. There is in first place the USA. It must have first place because of our common language and accessibility, but also its millions of Christian homes, unadorned gospel churches and pulpits, publishing houses, seminaries, Christian school and college networks and Christian radio stations. It produces from very different backgrounds outstanding men whose confessional Christianity causes them to stand together. From fundamentalism, John MacArthur; from Dutch Calvinism, Joel Beeke; from the Southern Baptist denomination, Al Mohler. Remarkable men all of them and

standing in the vital tradition of Warfield, Machen, Van Til, Francis Schaeffer, Jay Adams and R C Sproul. What seminaries it erects, the vast Southern Baptist seminary in Louisville, with over 70 members of staff and several thousand students, the dozen Presbyterian seminaries, all confessional

THERE IS CHINA WITH THE BEWILDERING STATISTICS FOR THE GROWTH OF CHRISTIANITY IN THE LAST FEW DECADES.

institutions. America is full of encouragement. Something is going on there. God knows. But look around elsewhere in the world, to areas which are not influenced by the greenback dollar, and there is China with the bewildering statistics for the growth of Christianity in the last few decades to maybe 100 million disciples or far more and still growing. You will also consider Eritrea, Korea, Zambia and Brazil with their thrilling histories of gospel growth.

6. *Pulpits in the UK*

Over fifty years ago how hard it was to find pulpits where the incumbent preached the whole counsel of God. It is not the case today. There are 14,000 towns in England and Wales, and there are very few of them that lack some kind of gospel testimony. Many have free grace pulpits and that is certainly the case in university towns. Then there are the villages, Stanton Lees, Great Ellingham, Clarbent Road, Halperton and hundreds more. France has 40,000 towns without any gospel witness at all. Of course it is a fight, a war, an endurance race, with a vicious enemy. There are not a lot of places enjoying numerical growth in the UK, but there is a lot of Christ-like testimony and living. There is not much great preaching – and that is what the days call for – but there is good preaching,

as I have been hearing over the last nine months since retiring. These pulpits feed congregations. There are many gospel sermons preached in our day. And that preaching has led to a distinctive British piety, a godliness which is the light of England and Wales. I see it as a sweetness of nature, a humility, a warm affection, a kindness and thoughtfulness displayed when you are suffering, a truthfulness and dependability. Great graces. Immense graces – the life of heaven on earth! We all have our favourite Christians whom we visit in many communities and conferences. They are a blessed people who sit under blessed ministries.

7. Organisations like 'The Christian Institute' and 'Christian Concern'

There are organisations like 'The Christian Institute' and 'Christian Concern' that are doing what no local church could do, and so are needed by all the congregations. They keep watch on politicians and law-making and discrimination against believers. They provide a network of articles and information so that week by week we are warned of what is happening. They defend the consciences of men and women whose humble opinions have brought upon themselves dismissal and unemployment and even charges of law-breaking. The shabby treatment of evangelical Christians is no longer being done in a corner.

8. Creation convictions

There is a widespread awakening of interest in understanding the opening 11 chapters of the Bible. The facticity of those Scriptures is promoted by hundreds of books and large conferences and regular annual meetings in most churches. The

historicity of Adam, the supernatural creation of Eve, a historic fall, that man did not die until he sinned and defied his Lord – all these are now declared to be non-negotiables among evangelical Christians..

9. Theological seminaries

One does not have to think in terms of America to gain a good education and preparation for the work of the ministry. There is a variety of theological training in the four nations of the United Kingdom which we believe to be among the best in all the continent of Europe.

10. This conference (the Westminster Conference)

There is this conference at the end of the year, the ultimate gathering in a series of at least a dozen conferences in England and Wales that begin in January and then, on an average of one each month, continue through the year. You can attend such serious conservative evangelical gatherings, for ministers, for students and for families where the free grace of God is explained and proclaimed. Some are huge by British standards, but none is dominated by big personalities. All are barometers to the largely hidden work of God that is going on week by week in homes and congregations, on websites and fraternals, in magazines and publishing houses, in camps and beach missions, in Christian schools and home-schoolers, in universities and colleges, unknown and unrecognised by the world, but directed secretly and irresistibly by him who said that he would build his church and the gates of hell would not prevail against it. ■

Dr Geoff Thomas served Alfred Place Baptist Church in Aberystwyth for over 50 years until his retirement last year.

Southern Sudan

Please pray for this deeply troubled country suffering from political unrest, violence and, as a result, a very serious crisis for food and water. Please also pray for Christians helping there. For a young Dutch couple, called Wim and Marlies Hobo, serving with Missionary Aviation Fellowship (MAF). Also for efforts to reach this country with the gospel of Christ. Several brethren in Kenya are involved in training men for this ministry.

Pastor Naphtally Ogallo wrote the following in a recent newsletter: 'For the past two years Pastor Sam Oluoch of Grace Baptist Church Kisumu and I have been visiting Kakuma Refugee Camp to find ways of helping South Sudanese reach their own people with

the gospel of grace. Babale Mamchoko is the first to join Kisumu Reformed School of Theology (KReST) this February for theological training and aims to help his local church in Kakuma and hopefully move back home in the future with the gospel of grace. Babale enjoyed his first two courses: New Testament Epistles and Early Church History. He spent his first Sunday in Eldoret and joined in worship. He then stayed in Kisumu for the following weekend and joined the Kisumu church for worship before beginning the gruesome journey back to Kakuma for May classes. Pray for him.'

Naphtally also mentioned that building work for the new church building in Eldoret has started (see front cover) ■

William Perkins Conference

This conference is due to take place on 19 and 20 May this year at the historic Round Church in Cambridge where William Perkins ministered. The topic will be *William Perkins, His life and his ministry*. Speakers will be Joel Beeke, Sinclair Ferguson, Geoff Thomas, Greg Salazar, and Stephen Yuille.

Admission is free. For more information, please contact Mr Peter Leverton at +44-1223-212370 or by e-mail at peterleverton1@gmail.com. ■



Round Church Cambridge: Venue of this Conference



Update on Recent Conferences

The table below gives an overview of conferences held in various locations in Africa in February and March 2017. The total number of books distributed since 2006 now stands at 96,128.

COUNTRY	LOCATION	DELEGATES	BOOKS Sold & Free
South Africa	Eldorado Park	20	138
South Africa	Tembiso	24	472
South Africa	Welkom	51	655
Nigeria	Karu	70	759
Nigeria	Lagos	67	424
Nigeria	Gindiri	359	1301
Nigeria	Bukuru, Jos	200	599
Botswana	Gaborone	33	589
Zimbabwe	Victoria Falls	17	131
Zambia	Livingstone	67	701
South Africa	Kagiso	15	120

Report from the Conferences:

The country of Nigeria is a federation of 36 states. On this APC run, four conferences in the states of Abuja, Lagos, Plateau and Kaduna were scheduled. The APC team comprised speaker Pastor Choolwe Mwetwa (Pastor of Chingola Baptist Church in Zambia), and South Africans Nico van Zyl (APC Conference Manager and speaker) and Gayle Staegemann (APC Bookroom Manager, doing sales and admin). The team flew from South Africa to Abuja, the capital of Nigeria but only the 16th largest city. Our conferences took place in a narrow band from SW to NE, so there is much scope for APCs in Nigeria!

The theme for all these conferences was 'The Biblical pastor'. Both speakers preached powerfully and were greatly helped by the Holy Spirit. The messages were taken seriously and there was a sincere desire to pastor biblically. The delegates were teachable and keen for instruction. Their hunger for God's Word was very obvious.

Two free books were donated to each registered Bible teacher. These were:

- » *Preaching Pure and Simple* by Stuart Olyott, published by Bryntirion Press.
- » *The Ministry* by Charles J Brown, published by Banner of Truth.

APC organisers express their gratitude to:

- » Mt. Zion Bible Church for their generous sponsorship of these Nigerian conferences.
- » Adamu Maga, a dear brother in Christ, who organised the entire run, and showed the team kindness and care.
- » The many publishers who give us a sizeable discount on our purchases. APC is also grateful to Pastor Phil Roberts in the UK who arranged the purchasing and shipping (flight) of the books

Please, give thanks for 1) God's protection of the team and for their safety in travel and at the conferences; 2) good attendance at the conferences, and 3) powerful preaching and attentive listeners.

Please pray 1) for peace in Nigeria; 2) for fruit from these labours for God's glory; 3) that we may return to Nigeria in 2018 or possibly again in 2017, God willing, and hold more conferences, and 4) for wisdom to plan the work of APC.



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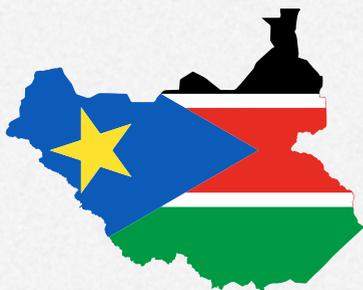
Further details about individual APC conferences are available from Phil Roberts (phil@tentmaker.org.uk) or Frederick Hodgson (frederick.hodgson@gmail.com)



SOUTH SUDAN

Please pray for this country

(see news inside)



Next Issue

▶ The 500th Anniversary of the Reformation