

# REFORMATION TODAY



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*Cliff and Martie Hellar have spent 43 years as front-line missionaries in Papua New Guinea. Lance, their son, and Robyn, his wife, have spent 15 years working among the tribes. Here Lance is seen with Tom, a fellow worker, on their way to a monthly two-day conference for church leaders of the Menja tribe in which Paul's letter to the Romans is the basis of preaching and study.*

*Without the resources provided by Dr Peter Brierley (see page 35) the preparation of the graphs by Dr Stephen Collins on pages 30 to 34 would not have been possible. Warm gratitude is expressed to him for his work and to Dr Brierley for his advice.*

*Front cover picture - Danny Roten has been a front line missionary in Mexico since 1978 in the town of Cardenas, San Luis Potosi, which is 290 miles north of Mexico City and has a population of about 20,000. This picture was taken in a home where a group of believers meet. The town is acquainted with shallow and sometimes wild evangelistic methods, but these brethren are striving to set forth a clear 'doctrines of grace' gospel message. They are working actively to evangelize both in the city where they meet, and in the nearby Pa-me Indian villages.*

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## Editorial

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### *The Next Revival*

The graphs in the article ‘The Battle for Christianity in Great Britain’ convey a powerful message. Negatively, we see that death is written where liberalism has killed the gospel. It is like the incident in the life of Elisha when one of the prophets gathered gourds from a wild vine and added them to the stew. As the men began to eat their meal they cried out, ‘O man of God, there is death in the pot!’ Whole denominations have been destroyed by death in the pot and there has been no Elisha to deal with the crisis. The last Elisha of the Baptist Union was C H Spurgeon. They refused to listen to him.

Positively we learn that wherever the gospel is preached faithfully there is an upward trend.

Overall the main lesson is that we must plead for revival. More than any country Great Britain has a history of revivals. Boniface (680-754) esteemed by some as the greatest ever English missionary and ‘the apostle of Germany’ is a reminder that England has for a very long time been blessed with the truth. John Wycliff and his Lollards are another reminder. Then came the English Reformers followed by three generations of Puritans. After steep decline there followed the amazing 18<sup>th</sup>-century Awakening. That in turn was followed by the revival times of 1792 to 1820 which also marked the great missionary movement. Then came the time of 1858-1860. In an article in *The Churchman* (Summer 2005) retired clergyman Dennis Peterson laments the fact that we have lost sight of the 1859-60 revival in England in which the membership of the Church of England grew from 18 percent of the population to 27 percent. This fact in itself reminds us that an outpouring of the Holy Spirit can bring about a radical change. It is the preaching of the gospel alone that makes the difference. In the 1960s and 1970s there was a renewal in Great Britain of reformed theology. That resulted in many growing and healthy reformed churches.

The twentieth century saw some of the most extensive spiritual awakenings in the history of the Church. The most extensive of these has been in China which with 1.3 billion has the largest population in the world. An extended



article describing the amazing growth of Christianity in China appeared in *The Daily Telegraph* (July 30, 2005). It commented on the heavy-handed Politburo response to Christianity spreading through town and country and Chinese communities abroad. State-sanctioned churches (Catholic and Protestant) claim up to 35 million. More significant are the underground house churches which are said to have 80 or 100 million members. A description of revivals in China can be found in books such as *Jesus in Beijing* by David Aikman, published by Monarch and *The Resurrection of the Chinese Church* by Tony Lambert, published by Hodder and Stoughton.

In an essay with the title *The Next Forty Years for Christian Missions*<sup>1</sup> Patrick Johnstone shows that the proportion of Western and non-Western Christians has changed dramatically. Whereas non-Western Christians formed only 35.5 percent of the whole in 1960, by 2000 this had changed to 59 percent. If this trend continues, and the signs are that it will, then by 2040, 75 percent of Christendom will be non-Western.

Western Europe is now a mission field awaiting re-evangelisation perhaps by missionaries from China, Korea, Africa, Brazil, the Philippines and India.

In our prayer meetings we should have a much greater emphasis on prayer for national and global revival. But our intercession must always be joined with humble obedience and practical efforts in gospel effort together with practical support of missionaries abroad. If our prayers are in a spirit of laziness they will only serve to antagonize God. 'O LORD God Almighty, how long will your anger smoulder against the prayers of your people' (Ps 80:4). Revival often comes as God's people persevere in good works and faithfully keep the Lord's Day (Is 58:6-14).

Generally fervent prayer precedes revival. That was very clear before the great 16<sup>th</sup> Century Reformation and before the 18<sup>th</sup>-century Great Awakening. A concert of prayer preceded times of revival in England from 1792 to 1830, and the revival that spread from coast to coast and from North to South of America in 1858 was a revival that was borne along on the lines of prayer meetings. Prayer is engendered by the Holy Spirit as Joseph Hart expressed it:

*Prayer was appointed to convey  
The blessings God designs to give.*

Or as William Cowper described it

*Prayer makes the darkened cloud withdraw;  
Prayer climbs the ladder Jacob saw;  
Gives exercise to faith and love,  
Brings every blessing from above.*

Most encouraging of all is the fact that sometimes revival comes when there is great weakness and very few praying people. Iain Murray in his book *Pentecost Today – the Biblical Basis for Understanding Revival* cites a number of notable instances of amazing powerful revivals coming down from heaven into situations of apathy, discouragement and weakness.<sup>2</sup> What is revival but God in his omnipotence breathing life into lifeless situations?

Our narrow expectations are not the measure of the entire work of God. When the Spirit came down at Pentecost, the people were ‘utterly amazed’ (Acts 2:7). In fact they were ‘amazed and perplexed’ (v 12). God is full of surprises. This is why A Skevington Wood, the historian of the First Great Awakening, proposes:

‘The next great spiritual awakening may be utterly unlike any that has gone before. We must beware, then, of an undue fixation in our concept of revival. The Holy Spirit is not limited to a stereotype. He enjoys and exhibits an unconditional liberty.’

‘The Lord Jesus may at any time and under any circumstances grant us a fresh bestowment of his Spirit. And we can be certain that nothing will defeat God’s purpose whenever he chooses to renew a season of unusual richness. How can any opposition down here on earth restrain the outpouring of the Spirit from on high? ... At any time, in any measure, upon any church, the Sovereign Lord is able to send the showers of his Spirit, for his greater glory, our richer joy, and the salvation of the nations.’<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Global Passion - a book of essays to mark George Verwer's contribution to World Mission*, published by Authentic Lifestyle, 2003, page 180ff.

<sup>2</sup> Iain Murray, *Pentecost Today – the Biblical Basis for Understanding Revival*, Banner of Truth, 1989, pages 66 ff.

<sup>3</sup> Raymond C Ortlund, Jr, *Revival sent from God*, IVP, 2000, p. 27 and 93.

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## News

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### Nigeria

In RT 207 pastor Ani Ekpo gave a report of the 2004 Annual Reformed Bible Conference in Port Harcourt. 152 pastors attended that Conference. We now have news of the 2005 Conference. This time the attendance was over 200.

The theme of the 2005 Conference was derived from 1 Timothy 4:16, *Take Heed To Yourself and To Your Doctrine*. The venue was the Reformed Tabernacle worship hall, Rumuodara, Port Harcourt. The speakers were Pastor Joseph Jacowitz, Roger Fay (who included Jonathan Edwards as a case study in his expositions), Alan Levy of Penyrheol Free Church, Swansea, Wales, (who spoke on *The Pastor's Temptations*), Paul Crossley of Tinsill Free Church, Leeds, and Pastor Ani R. Ekpo (who presented the life of John Calvin as a challenge for our times). Pastor Tony Okoroh of Sovereign Grace Bible Church, Lagos, Nigeria, brought two addresses on the pastor's prayer life and pastor Paul Cookey contributed doctrinal expositions.

There were two book stands stocked with Puritan and Reformed literature.

Next year the Conference will be in Lagos, Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> to Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> November 2006, and Port Harcourt – Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> to Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> November 2006. The theme will be *The Supremacy and Centrality of Christ in Ministry*.

### North Korea

The United Nations General Assembly has adopted its first ever resolution on the human rights situation in North

Korea. The resolution tabled by the European Union was passed with a vote of 84 for, 22 against and 62 abstentions. South Korea, which has been lobbied extensively to take a clear stance on the human rights issue, abstained.

The resolution expresses serious concern at the continuing reports of systematic and grave violations of human rights in North Korea, including torture, public executions, the existence of a large number of prison camps and the extensive use of forced labour. It also expresses serious concern over the 'all-pervasive and severe restrictions on freedoms of thought, conscience, religion, opinion and expression, peaceful assembly and association'. Severe violations against women are also addressed, including forced abortions and infanticide in detention. The punishments including the death penalty against those who are repatriated to North Korea are raised, as is the issue of abduction.

As North Korea has persistently refused even to acknowledge the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur assigned to the country, and will not cooperate with him nor with the office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the GA resolution represents the next obvious step.

In a deeply disturbing move, North Korea has reacted to the resolution by ordering European non-governmental aid agencies to leave the country.

Elizabeth Batha, CSW's International Advocate, stated, 'North Korea is seeking to penalise the EU by punishing its own people through the withdrawal of EU aid. This only reinforces the concerns expressed by

the resolution.' (*Christian Solidarity Worldwide*).

### **Eritrea**

In RT 208 attention was drawn to the severe persecution of Christians in Eritrea. The number of Eritrean believers now in jail for their faith has increased to 1,778, almost double of what it was six months ago. At least 26 full-time Protestant pastors and Orthodox clergy are in jail. Their bank accounts are frozen. Their families are subject to acute suffering.

### **Russia**

*Evangelical Press Conference in St Petersburg, Russia - report by Geoff Thomas.*

There were about 70 present, and though it was aimed at pastors there were many more teenagers and women present this year than in previous years. It was more a family conference and my messages were suitable for that.

During the Soviet era the non-registered churches were the courageous resisters to the State's attempt to control Jesus Christ's pulpit and families. The training of the young they saw as their responsibility, not Caesar's. There is a different atmosphere in today's Russia and the difference between registered and non-registered churches still exists but does not seem as essential as then. Both groups are confessionally Arminian; both believe that the decisive element in salvation is the free will of man making a decision for Christ. In both churches there is enormous power vested in the pastors, but the non-registered are stricter churches; women must have

long dresses and hats in worship; no TV; no going to movies; no alcoholic beverages; no make-up etc. Few are sympathetic to the Bible's teaching on the sovereignty of God.

145 million people speak Russian as their first language while another 110 million have it as their second language. Russia is in serious trouble. Her population has been in decline since 1992 because of poor medical care, one of the world's least healthy diets, the national weakness for vodka and the prevalence of abortion. Up to 60% of Russian pregnancies end in abortions, and 10% of the women who have them are below the age of eighteen. There were 1.6 million registered abortions in Russia last year and 1.5 million births. Ten million Russians are sterile due to botched abortions. The population of 143 million could plummet to 77 million by the middle of this century. It dropped almost half a million in the last year alone. Life expectancy for Russian men has dropped to 58 which is 20 years below the average in Iceland. The main killer is heart disease. The number of Russian schoolchildren has dropped by one million a year since 1999. There are now over 5,000 schools in Russia with only ten pupils each. The short-term solution is to attract immigrants but there is a racist element that rejects newcomers. Politicians who encouraged abortion and promoted the myth of over-population sowed the wind and now they are reaping the whirlwind. Russia needs the good news of the Lord Jesus Christ. May this fledgling conference and the translation of these books and the free grace churches, Baptists and Presbyterians

alike, know God's great blessing on them in the century to come.

### **Greece**

Greece has been dominated by the Orthodox Church for centuries. The Orthodox Church is the official State Church. Although there are some genuine believers in the church, few appear to know Christ in a saving way. Evangelicals are few in number.

The population of Greece is 10.6 million. Most of the people are native Greeks with a number of other ethnic minorities. For many years the Orthodox Church enjoyed almost exclusive freedom to operate. Other groups were routinely discriminated against and persecuted. Protestants were the favorite target. Constitutional changes in the mid-1970s brought some relief, but persecution still occurs toward those who preach the gospel.

Although nearly everyone is on the roll of the Orthodox Church, few show a genuine relationship with Christ. Only 2% of the population actually attend church of any sort.

Evangelicals are rare in Greece - just a few thousand, and often persecuted for attempting to convert others. Many of the islands have no evangelical witness.

It is difficult for missionaries to obtain visas to come to Greece, and the work is difficult for those who are allowed in. Pray for those who minister there. (extracted from robjenny@one.net)

### **The UK - Church of England**

The Church of England began ordaining women as priests in 1994. Now, fully half of those studying to be priests are women. In 1994 ecclesiastical laws were put into place that prevented the election of a woman as bishop. The prohibition against women bishops was a concession

necessary at that time. It was only a matter of time for the rule against women bishops to fall. BBC News reports that the Church's governing body has just taken steps to remove the barriers to women bishops. As the report indicates, 'The vote beginning "the process for removing the legal obstacles to the ordination of women" came after a debate at the General Synod in York.' Once the biblical pattern of ministry is compromised, further compromise is all but inevitable. It is only a matter of time.

### **Zambia and Botswana**

The Reformed Baptist Periodical, *Reformation Zambia*, September - December 2005, reports that notable churches are without pastors. Nigel Lacey retired in September 2004 and the Lusaka Baptist Church is still in need of a pastor. Early this year Brian Njovu left Fairview Reformed Baptist Church in Mufulira and Lawrence Lama left Central Baptist Church in Mansa. Isaac Makashini left Trinity Baptist Church in Kitwe in July.

Conrad Mbewe reports as follows: 'In December 2003 we applied to the Botswana government for the registration of the first Reformed Baptist Church in that country that we had just started in that country's capital. After almost two years of anxious waiting and fervent praying, this registration was finally granted in November. We are very excited about this. The next phase is to apply for a work permit for our missionary pastor, Kapambwe Nsenduluka. Please pray for this process to be successful so that he may move 'on site' and put both hands to the plough.'



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# The Suffering Servant and Conqueror

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*Editor*

The method I will employ in opening this subject is as follows:

1. The four Servant Songs of Isaiah – a brief overview
2. A closer look at the fourth Servant Song
3. An introduction to the Anointed Conqueror

## 1. THE FOUR SERVANT SONGS OF ISALAH – A BRIEF OVERVIEW

The Lord Jesus possesses in sublime perfection all those attributes which enable him to fulfil his position as Head of the Church. He is our great high priest who ever lives to intercede for us. One of his titles is 'that great Shepherd of the sheep' (Heb 13:20). Christ cares for all his people but he does so largely through his undershepherds (1 Peter 5:1-4). The chief Shepherd equips and inspires pastors. He motivates and energises them in their labours. Daily they draw their strength from him.

As chief pastor Christ is the example or exemplar for those in ministerial office. What was he like as pastor in his earthly ministry?

His ministry is described in the four Gospels. The principles and character of that ministry are also described by the prophet Isaiah. Isaiah is foremost in the Old Testament for poetic brilliance. He is the 'Shakespeare' of the Bible. Divine inspiration shines brightly in his writing. He wrote four Servant Songs (poems) which describe the Messiah. The first, Isaiah 42:1-4, is introductory to the others. It begins with the word See! or Behold! Our attention is riveted on this one who is called the Servant of Yahweh.

Who is this mysterious Servant? Can we be sure of the identity of this Servant? Cyrus king of Persia (599-530) is called the Lord's anointed and the Lord's Shepherd (Isa 44:28; 45:1-7,13; 45:4). These four Servant Songs cannot refer to Cyrus because his role was political. He does not fit the picture presented. The nation Israel is also called God's Servant (Isa 44:1). Israel failed to fulfil the particular role of servanthood intended, that is, to be a light to the surrounding Gentile nations. Israel does not fit here either.

The Servant who corresponds to these four Servant Songs is the Son of Man, the Messiah. He is Yahweh's Servant who said, 'The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many' (Mark 10:45).

The Servant Songs appear in the following order:

1. Isaiah 42:1-4
2. Isaiah 49:1-6
3. Isaiah 50:4-9
4. Isaiah 52:13 - 53:12<sup>1</sup>

The first Song, 42:1-4 is in three stanzas. In these we have a photographic album of our Saviour.

In a wonderful way the first Song contains the main elements of what will be developed and opened up in the three Servant songs to follow.

The second song is autobiographical. This is the Servant speaking. Imagine in his youth Jesus coming to recognise himself in this scripture. This is the only scripture where the Servant Messiah expresses discouragement. The reason for his discouragement is articulated clearly and refers to the small impact made by him, 'I have laboured to no purpose' (49:4). This point of discouragement could be illustrated by the fact that when he was arrested his disciples forsook him and fled. It was only at Pentecost that his cause on earth begins to move forward significantly.

The second Song begins as autobiography but becomes an interplay of speech, a dialogue, between the Servant and Yahweh. 'He said to me' - but I said, 'I have laboured in vain.' To that the answer is given, 'You will restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that your salvation might be to the ends of the earth'(49:4-6).

The third Servant Song, (50:4-9) is autobiographical throughout. Here the Servant is introduced to the parameters of his suffering. How did the young Jesus come to terms with the shame and mocking and humiliation, the plucking out of his beard? Verse four is inspiring with regard to our devotional lives as we model ourselves on Jesus. 'He wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being

taught.’ As he awakens he is sensitive to the prompting and guidance of the Holy Spirit. He listens. He receives instruction. In this way he knows exactly how to speak to the weary. He is ready for the demands of the day.

Is that how we begin each day? From the time we become conscious are we listening? Are we meditating on the Word of God? Are we sensitive to the pastoral needs that call for our attention? Are we thinking of the best way to deal with them?

The fourth Servant Song is the one we know best and it is more detailed than the others. The whole begins at Isaiah 52:13, with a call to behold Yahweh’s Servant. The first stanza provides an introductory outline of what is opened up in more detail in the next four stanzas of Isaiah 53.

## 2 A CLOSER LOOK AT THE FOURTH SERVANT SONG

I summarise the outstanding features as follows:

*Stanza one* (52:13-15). He is disfigured beyond recognition yet he will sprinkle many nations. This disfigurement is appalling. It is frightening. The assaults made upon him disfigure his appearance so brutally that it is worse than that of any man. Only Jesus as described in the Gospels approximates to this description. The first stanza introduces two themes, which will be developed in the four stanzas that follow. First there is his suffering followed by the outcome, which is that he will sprinkle many nations. Sprinkling has to do with cleansing from sin and defilement (Lev 1:5; Num 19:13; Ezek 36:25). Today there are 237 nations in the world. In spite of efforts to exclude Christianity in some countries there are believers in at least 230 nations. In some instances the number who put their whole trust in Christ for salvation is very large. It is now accepted that there are more believers in China (about 70 million) than Communist party members. Yet while this idea of sprinkling is valid the Hebrew text is better translated ‘startle’. ‘And he will again startle many nations. Kings will stand speechless in his presence. For they will see what they had not previously been told about; they will understand what they had not heard about.’ (NLT)<sup>2</sup>

*Stanza two* (53:1-3). This stanza begins with the famous stirring question, ‘Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of

the LORD been revealed?' What follows explains why it is difficult to believe. How is it possible to believe in a failure? How can we believe in one who was tormented and crucified? That has always been hard for those who want a leader who is attractive. By nature we glory in winners not losers. We love the victorious not the defeated!

Hence the challenging question, To whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? It takes an act of omnipotent power, the strong arm of the LORD, for a person to come to faith in Jesus of Nazareth.

The Servant comes out of a humble background. He is from the stump of Jesse, a root out of dry ground. This exactly fits the Messiah who is the Son of David. As to his human nature he was descended from David (Rom 1:4). The reasoning here is that from a natural point of view no one would believe on him because there is nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. This does not refer to his facial portrait but rather to the overall nature of his ministry. No painter, not Rembrandt nor Roualt (who is thought by some to be the 20th-century equivalent of Rembrandt), has depicted correctly the face of Jesus. Providentially his portrait is not known. No, the focus must be on his atoning work which is like a crimson thread that runs through the stanzas three, four and five.

*Stanza three* (53:4-6). Here the opening sentence introduces the theme of substitution, 'Surely he took up our infirmities.' The emphasis in this stanza is on vicarious atonement. The meaning of vicar is a person acting, or appointed to act in the place of another. Yahweh's Servant suffers and dies in the place of others. In this stanza there is repeated emphasis on substitution. There are 16 personal pronouns which express substitution. For example: *He* took up *our* infirmities. *He* was crushed for *our* iniquities. By *his* wounds *we* are healed. The LORD has laid on *him* the iniquity of *us* all. The punishment that brought *our* peace was upon *him* and by *his* wounds *we* are healed. *He* was pierced for *our* transgressions. The term pierced is the same as is used in Psalm 22 where it says, 'They pierced my hands and my feet' (Ps 22:16) which is descriptive of crucifixion.<sup>3</sup> Hymn 42:5 in PRAISE! tells the story:

His hands were pierced, the hands that made  
the mountain range and forest glade,  
that washed the stains of sin away  
and changed earth's darkness into day.



His feet were pierced, the feet that trod  
the furthest shining star of God,  
and left their imprint deep and clear  
on every winding pathway here.

His heart was pierced, the heart that burned  
to comfort every heart that yearned;  
and from it came a cleansing flood,  
the river of redeeming blood.

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

All this is the purpose of Yahweh for our sake. 'He was stricken by God, smitten by him and afflicted.'

*Stanza four* (53:7-9). While the crimson thread of vicarious atonement continues in the words 'for the transgression of my people he was stricken' (53:8), the main focus of these verses is on the behaviour of the Servant in his suffering which is summarised in the opening sentence, 'He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb so he did not open his mouth.' Peter's testimony concerning the Servant confirms this when he says, 'He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth. When they hurled insults against him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead he entrusted himself to him who judges justly' (1 Peter 2:22,23).

The sequence of life, suffering, death, burial (53:9), resurrection (53:11), ascension and exaltation (52:13,14) can be traced out in Jahweh's Servant. His grave is not a common grave. Rather he is buried in the grave of a rich man. It was fitting that a perfectly innocent victim should be given an honourable burial. That grave was also practical in its geography as it was the means of making his resurrection as clear to the world as possible.

*Stanza five* (53:10-12). This concluding stanza begins with the repeated emphasis that this suffering was the purpose of God for our sake. 'Yet it was the LORD'S will to crush him and cause him to suffer' and

‘make his life a guilt offering’ (53:10). As suggested above, the substitutionary element is sustained throughout this fourth Servant passage. ‘He will bear their iniquities’ (53:11). The last verse repeats that reality, ‘For he bore the sin of many and made intercession for the transgressors’ (53:12).

However the main focus of the fifth and final stanza is objective and focuses on the Father’s purpose and the reward that will be given to his Servant. To what end is this horrendous suffering? The answer is that he will see his offspring. Jesus was unmarried. He was not a family man. His spiritual progeny is innumerable and is seen in all the nations, tribes, kindreds and languages of the world.

Commensurate with the severity of his suffering is the reward that is given him. Isaiah 52:13 and 53 is parallel with Psalm 22 which describes anguish of betrayal and crucifixion followed by a description of reward. ‘All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the earth will bow down before him, for dominion belongs to the LORD and he rules over the nations’ (22:27,28).

‘He poured out his life unto death’ (53:12). There could hardly be a more expressive way of describing that the Servant voluntarily gave his all in the great purpose to redeem us from sin.

The four Servant Songs of Isaiah fit exactly the descriptions of Jesus in the four Gospels. These descriptions constrain a response from the reader. On his way home to Ethiopia a high ranking Ethiopian eunuch was in a chariot reading this passage in Isaiah. He was on his way home from Jerusalem. He was joined by Philip who asked him if he understood the passage. “How can I,” he said, “unless someone explains it to me?” Philip explained to him that all this has been fulfilled in Jesus and that by our union by faith with Jesus the cleansing and merit of Jesus’ death are put to our account. That is salvation. The Ethiopian eunuch believed and asked if he could be baptised. The account is recorded in Acts 8:26-40.

The text declares, ‘By his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many’ (53:11). That means by a knowledge of what he has achieved for us we will be justified. To disbelieve is disastrous because that will leave us in a state of sin and guilt. Yahweh is extraordinarily sensitive about the giving of his Servant to such a death. It is imperative that the

sinner embrace this Servant of Yahweh for only in him is there salvation full and free.

### 3 AN INTRODUCTION TO THE ANOINTED CONQUEROR

It is important to observe that a second series of songs which Alec Motyer in his commentary on Isaiah calls the Songs of the Anointed Conqueror. Whereas the first set of four songs describes the suffering of the Servant of Jehovah the second set address the subject of his reward and his reign at the Father's right hand.

There is a connection between the two sets of songs. The word 'seed' occurs at the end of Song Four 'He will see his seed'. It occurs again in the first of the second series of four songs, 'My Spirit, who is on you, and my words that I have put in your mouth will not depart from your mouth, or from the mouths of your children (Hebrew - seed), or from the mouths of their descendents (Hebrew - seed's seed)' (59:21). The second series of songs runs like this.

SONG One (59:21). Biography. The Messiah is endowed with the Spirit. Elaboration (60:1-22) consists of ten stanzas all of which except one fall into eight lines five on each side of the pivotal statement of verse 12 which is that the nation which will not serve Zion will perish. Isaiah is unique in his use of the metaphor of light. Jesus is the light of the world. 'Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn' (60:3). The riches of the nations will be brought into his service. There will be a mighty multiplication of followers, 'The least of you will become a thousand, the smallest a mighty nation. I am the LORD; in its time I will do this swiftly' (60:22).

SONG Two (61:1-3) is in the form of autobiography. The Messiah is anointed with the Spirit and appointed to preach good news. Jesus applied these verses to himself in the synagogue of Nazareth (Luke 4:18,19). In the elaboration that follows (61:4-9) the Messiah is described as the restorer of desolate places and ruined cities. As expressed in 62:1-22 the wealth of the nations will be brought into his service (61:6).

SONG Three (61:10-62:7) This too is an autobiography. As the sinless one he secures righteousness and salvation for us. It is appropriate therefore that he declares, 'I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with the garments of

salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness' (61:10). The righteousness that he has secured will spring up before all nations (61:11). Righteousness must be applied. Hence the Anointed Conqueror intercedes: 'For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, for Jerusalem's sake I will not remain quiet, till her righteousness shines out like the dawn, her salvation like a blazing torch' (62:1). To achieve his purpose the Anointed Conqueror has placed watchmen on the walls of Jerusalem who will never be silent day or night. Yes, all who call on the name of the LORD must give themselves no rest and give him no rest till he establishes Jerusalem and makes her the praise of the earth (62:6,7). In Isaiah 62:11 three times the word Behold! is used. (The NIV misses this). The word Behold! calls for our attention. The first 'Behold' is to emphasise that gospel proclamation is to the ends of the earth. It is to all nations and tribes. The second is to stress that this proclamation is about the stupendous issue of personal salvation (Hebrew is salvation not Saviour as in the NIV). The third 'Behold' is to stress the wonderful reward that comes with this salvation (Rom 8:12).

SONG Four (63:1-6) is a further autobiography. The Anointed Conqueror comes to administer justice. He effects vengeance as well as salvation. This is about the winepress of the wrath of God (Rev 14:17-20; 19:15). Countless martyrs have been murdered in the most cruel way. Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord (Rom 12:19). The elaboration which follows takes us to the end of chapter 64 and consists of motivation for prayer (7-14) and intercession (15-19). Chapter 64 is a passionate appeal for global spiritual revival.

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## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Each of the Servant Songs is followed by an elaboration, 42:1-4 by verses 5 to 9, 49:1-6 by verses 7 to 13, 50:4-9 by verses 10 and 11 and 52:13 and 53 by chapter 54.
- <sup>2</sup> The translators of the Septuagint translated the Hebrew using the word *thaumazō* which means I wonder at, or I am astonished; *thaumasontai* (they will marvel). Alec Motyer observes that neither sprinkle nor startle is free of difficulty. Barnes comments helpfully as follows, 'Many will be struck dumb with amazement at his appearance; and, in like manner, many would be struck dumb with veneration or respect.'
- <sup>3</sup> Ps 22:16 is notoriously difficult. The translation of k'ari is disputed either 'pierced' or 'like a lion'.



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## Johan Heinrich Schmelen (1777-1848)

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*Father of Missions in Namibia*

*By Joachim Rieck*

Johan Heinrich Schmelen may undoubtedly be called the father of Namibian missions, even though his physical presence on Namibian soil amounted only to about 16 years. It is true to say that he bore the original physical burden for the conversion of the tribes of Namibia.

Buys and Nambala in their recently published *'History of the Church in Namibia'* say, 'Schmelen can be rightfully called the first permanent pastor of the Christian Church in Namibia.'<sup>1</sup>

Schmelen's 16 years of ministry at Bethanien in Southern Namibia had significant influence, not only his own work, representing the London Missionary Society, but also concerning the Wesleyan and Rhenish Missionary Societies and their church planting endeavours in Namibia, for he essentially encouraged their labours. For his gracious and fatherly concern and leadership he was affectionately known in later years as 'Father Schmelen'. Emma Sarah Hahn (1814-1880), having recently married the pioneer missionary Carl Hugo Hahn (1818-1895) in Cape Town, and 'en route' to the Namibian mission field, wrote in October 1843 to her mother: 'We were met about a half day's journey from Kommagas (Northern Cape - South Africa) by a dear old missionary whom we call Father Schmelen. Both he and Mrs Schmelen have received us with much kindness; indeed here I have felt more comfortable than in any other previous place.' This little note reflects on the love which Schmelen displayed towards all.

### **His youth and conversion in London**

Johan Heinrich Schmelen was born on the 7<sup>th</sup> January 1777 in Kassebruch, near Bremen in Germany. In a letter dated in 1831<sup>2</sup> he

writes: ‘My parents were neither rich nor poor, and they afforded my siblings and myself an education as was common for those of the middle class in those days. However, as I grew up, I also grew in godlessness and frivolity. In 1776 war erupted between France and Germany and many of our young people were conscripted into the army. With the consent of my parents, I left for England. I left my father’s house as a rebel and an unbeliever. But the Lord, who had better things for me in mind than the life of a prodigal son among the pigs, led my ways in London in a wonderful way. I came to stay in a home where there were many God-fearing Germans who took me to the Savoy Church (Congregational Church) where a preacher, Mr Borgman, was the pastor. Mr Steinkopf (after which the little town in the Northern Cape is named) became his successor. It was particularly under the preaching of my spiritual father Mr Steinkopf that it pleased the Lord to open my heart, and to show me the lost condition of my soul. At that time I knew that if I did not repent, and if I would continue to reject the truth of God, I would be eternally damned!’

In 1803 a missionary named Kircherer, working in South Africa, brought three Orlam Nama converts, Martha Arendse, Sara Fortuin and Klaas van Roy, to London. This caused quite a sensation since these people, giving testimony concerning Jesus Christ, were representatives of the firstfruits of the work among the Khoi-Khoi (Nama) people of Southern Africa.

Schmelen was impressed by the fact that the heathen had an undying soul. For three years he struggled with God as to whether he was to remain in London or minister to the heathen. Pastor Steinkopf, his spiritual father, advised Schmelen to attend a seminary, the Jaenicke Mission Institute, in Berlin, Germany. Upon completion of his studies he was sent to South Africa by the London Missionary Society.

### **Arrival on the mission field and firstfruits of his labours**

He arrived in Cape Town on the 15<sup>th</sup> September 1811 with a number of other missionaries. From Cape Town he travelled northwards to the Orange River which forms the border between South Africa and

Namibia.<sup>3</sup> Here he helped to start a mission station called Pella.<sup>4</sup> With Pella as his base Schmelen joined the nomadic Orlam Nama tribesmen and preached to them with great zeal, whilst praying that God would grant them repentance. He grew very discouraged, since there appeared to be no fruit from his labours. The Orlam Namas were a tribe of westernised Khoi-Khoi people. They wore clothes, spoke Dutch, and had horses and guns.

One day he heard the voice of a man praying behind a bush. It was the voice of Amraal Lamberts, one of the tribesmen. It was the first prayer from these heathen that Schmelen had ever heard. It amazed him that the spirit of prayer had also suddenly descended upon the others. Even very young children, as young as 5 years old, were affected. At night he heard the loud voices of the praying people. It seemed as if the Holy Spirit had come upon them. A number of these were eventually baptised in 1814. Among those baptised were his future wife, Zara Hendriks, and her sister Leentjie. Schmelen encouraged these two women to help in the work of this early congregation.

### **Missionary expansion into Namibia**

The London Missionary Society desired to reach the tribes north of the Orange River in Namibia. One of the great difficulties in the missionary labours had always been the irregular food and water supply. Schmelen was ordered by the LMS Inspector, John Campbell, to explore the mouth of the Orange river. He left on the 13<sup>th</sup> April 1814 with a group of 150 Orlam people. They found no suitable harbour for ships to anchor. The group proceeded to press northwards into Namibia. Schmelen's journal reflects his intense desire to minister the Word of God, to both his travel companions and to those Namas whom they occasionally encountered in their travels. The man's spirituality is obvious as he records in one of his letters: 'A sweet thought to me was always that despite those great difficulties and dangers of our journey, I could win souls for the kingdom of heaven. I hope and ask God daily that His Word might not fall on fruitless soil among the heathen who had never before heard the gospel which I proclaimed to them.'<sup>5</sup>

The group eventually reached a place called Ui Gantes,<sup>6</sup> in Namibia. A Nama chief by the name of Vleermuis of the tribe of the Veldskoendraers lived there. When he and his people saw the big group of people arriving on the horizon, they all fled. We need to remember that the region was ruled by a number of petty warlords. One of the first mission stations in the south of Namibia, called Warmbad, was attacked and ransacked by a warlord called Titus Afrikaner - a brother of the infamous warlord Jan Jonker Afrikaner, who was later converted. The tribespeople thought that it was he who was coming to attack them, but their fear turned to joy when it was discovered that it was the missionary Schmelen. Chief Vleermuis pleaded with Schmelen to stay and become their missionary. Schmelen stayed, and he renamed the place *Bethanien* - Bethany - which means 'house of depression'!

He writes at the beginning of his ministry in Bethanien: 'I determined right at the outset to know only Christ and him crucified, and I have prayed that as long as I live, I might never depart from this foundation. This was the gospel which I preached in Bethanien, and I had the pleasure of seeing in the short time that I spent there a remarkable work of God. Often I had to stop my preaching as the people were melted with tears, asking, "What must we do to be saved?" Bewildered I asked the Lord, "Lord, what are you doing?" But my astonishment soon turned into an intense love to him who ruled in my heart. I have seen the fulfillment of these words, "that an entire people would believe in one day"! Nearly the whole tribe and village was moved, and this greatly encouraged me to carry the gospel also to the furthest heathen. Being a rocky and stony place it wasn't easy to get about. I was not able to keep a horse in these conditions, and so I used an ox which was trained for riding. I took my Bible and a 'karos' (sheepskin) which I used by day as a saddle and as a bed by night. I crossed the vast areas of this land to preach the gospel. The Lord had delivered me often from the mouth of lions and other wild animals, and he blessed my feeble efforts so much that at times I forgot all about my hunger and thirst which I had to frequently endure on my journeys. My food was only a little meat. I had no bread, but the Lord strengthened me daily, so that by his grace I have endured.'<sup>7</sup>



After some time in this wilderness his clothes were completely worn out. Eventually he no longer had shirt or trousers, hat or shoes. He wore clothes made of animal skins and shoes as the Namas wore them. I can only imagine that his appearance must have been like that of John the Baptist, only this was in the wilderness of Namibia! The time had come to go back to Cape Town to look for new clothes and other essentials. But he had grave reservations about leaving. What would happen to the little flock once he left? In 1816 he left for Cape Town with twelve of his people. The journey there and back lasted 6 months.

Another biographer writes, 'He must have been a strange sight. He arrived one night at a mission station and they received him with much joy. The hostess wanted to make him a good plate of food, but he said: "Give me a piece of bread and a newspaper so that I may know what is happening in the world." When they wanted to wake him up in the morning, they saw that the bed was untouched. He still sat in the chair with the piece of bread in his hand and completely absorbed in the newspaper. It was the time when Napoleon, the great French general, was captured and imprisoned on St Helena Island, which is not far from the Namibian coast in the mid-Atlantic ocean.'<sup>8</sup>

In Cape Town he received a letter from the London Missionary Society. In this letter he was ordered not to return to Bethanien, but to establish a mission station which was called Bysondermeid in the Northern Cape. This mission station he later renamed Steinkopf, after his spiritual father, a Congregational pastor in England. When travelling from Windhoek to Cape Town one normally passes through this village.

This did not really please him because his heart was in Bethanien. What would happen to the young Christian converts? Would the evil one not destroy the work? His worst fears actually came true! The weeds had overgrown much of the good seed planted. But he did not lose courage. A few people remained faithful to the Lord.' They were looking forward to the return of their teacher. He was able to return to Bethanien in 1818 after he had been replaced in 1817 by a missionary called Kitchingman.

The first thing he did upon his return to Bethanien was to build a stone house, which is kept presently as a museum and is called the Schmelen Haus. Its claim to fame is that it is the oldest existing stone dwelling in Namibia. In the meantime the Orlam Nama tribe began to dispute with the other tribes of Southern Namibia, and began to raid their livestock. Schmelen at this time endeavored to faithfully preach the Word of God to the people of Bethanien. Morning and evening he preached expository sermons to them, helping them to understand the whole Bible. It seemed however as if the appetite for God's Word had suddenly vanished. The spontaneous singing and praying was beginning to fade. Instead, people were always found arguing. Schmelen wept and pleaded with the Lord that he would not withdraw his hand from them.

To add to all his troubles, there was a person, a deceiver and former member of the congregation who acted piously, but in reality was a hypocrite who was misleading the young people by taking them away from the church and engaging them in robbery among neighbouring tribes. Schmelen opposed and resisted these practices and therefore his presence among the Orlam Namas was increasingly despised. Yet there always remained a faithful little flock, loyal to the Lord Jesus and to their missionary shepherd.

In 1820 a missionary friend, the Methodist minister Barnabas Shaw, whom he had met in Cape Town on his last trip, came to visit him at Bethanien. This was the first visit which he had ever received from any missionary colleague. Their joy was great. Together they decided to reach the Rooi Nasie (Red Nation) - another tribe of the Namas. This tribe actually represents the core group of the Namaqua - Khoi-Khoi people. Their chief was regarded as the paramount chief of all the Namas. The Methodists tried to get a mission station going among the Red Nation, but their attempts failed because there was too much jealousy among the various tribes of the Namas.

When Schmelen returned to Bethanien from this trip, he faced new difficulties. Three years of drought had struck the land, and all prayer seemed to have failed. Schmelen was actually blamed for bringing on the drought, and in 1821 one of the Nama chiefs, Jan Booi, told him to leave Bethanien. He left with his faithful followers

and settled at the Orange River mouth where he led a nomadic life. A year later he was requested to come back. He did so, but the peace lasted no longer than a year, upon which he had to leave again. After this his house was plundered and burned. That brought Schmelen's work effectively to an end in Bethanien.

He returned to Cape Town, but in 1824 he decided to return to Namibia with 80 companions. They reached Bethanien once again in 1825. He still desired to find a suitable harbour on the Namibian coast, so that ships could supply the ever expanding mission stations, so that all the tribes of Namibia might hear the gospel. In 1825 he followed the Kuiseb river (a dry, seasonal river in central Namibia) down to its river mouth, and discovered a natural harbour. Today it is known as the port of Walvis Bay. There he encountered the Topnaar Namas. Later a mission station called Sheppmansdorp was founded there. Walvis Bay, the territory's most suitable harbour, eventually became the port from which all Namibian mission stations were supplied. Martin Rautanen, the Finnish missionary (whose biography was published in RT 204), disembarked there.

In 1830, after years of bitter struggle and a difficult ministry, his mission recalled him to Namaqualand (Northern Cape) at Kommagas, where he continued to live and minister until his death.

### **The translation of the Bible into Nama and the help Schmelen received from his Nama wife**

Back in 1822 Schmelen was requested to translate the New Testament into the Nama language. He had by this time married a Nama woman, Zara Hendriks, who was one of the first converts of his missionary labours. She was able to assist him in this difficult project. In 1831 (i.e. 9 years later) just after the Gospels were printed, Zara died from tuberculosis.

The biographer Moritz says, 'She was already ill when the last proof reading before printing was done in Cape Town. When she had read the last page, she put her fountain pen down and said, "Now my work on earth has been done. I can go home!" She died on the way home in the ox wagon - peacefully and tired, but with great peace.'<sup>9</sup> We need to appreciate the fact that it was Zara who in the main,

enabled her husband to translate the Gospels into Nama, when he had very little actual knowledge of the very difficult Nama language with its intricate click sounds.

The Governor of the Cape Province, Sir Lowry Cole, to whom Schmelen had handed a copy of the Nama Gospels, recognised the great work that was done by this remarkable man and his wife. He granted Schmelen and his mission a very large tract of land on which the mission station Kommagas was established.

When the Rhenish (Lutheran) missionary Carl Hugo Hahn visited him in 1841 at Kommagas, he noted that the church was filled with attentive listeners. Hahn commented, "In their spirituality these people were not behind their European counterparts."

Schmelen and Zara had one son and three daughters. The son died as a youth in 1838. Their daughters Hanna, Johanna and Friederike, were sent to Cape Town, where they received a good education. After the death of their mother they were a great support to their father. However, Schmelen found it difficult to be without a wife in Kommagas. In 1834 he married Elizaeth Bam from Cape Town.

In 1842 the German Rhenish missionary Franz Heinrich Kleinschmidt married Schmelen's daughter Hanna who was fluent in Nama, Dutch and English. This proved to be a great asset in their missionary labours in Namibia. After their wedding the Kleinschmidts left for central Namibia, where they started the mission station at Otjikango (today's Gross Barmen in central Namibia) among the Hereros, and at Rehoboth among the Nama people of Willem Swartbooi.

It is very interesting to note that Martin Rautanen<sup>10</sup> (called Nakambale) the 'apostle to the Ovambos', was later married to one of the Kleinschmidt daughters, Frieda. The Ovambo people were reached through the missionary labours of that remarkable missionary, Rautanen.

Schmelen's heart was consistently upon the mission to all the Namibian tribes, also including the Hereros and Ovambos, although he had never as yet had any formal contact with them. Matti Peltola,

in his excellent biography of ‘Nakambale’,<sup>11</sup> (Martin Rautanen) reflects on Schmelen’s missionary heart – particularly after he had moved to Kommagas (South Africa) in 1829 saying: ‘He could not forget the Namas and Hereros on the other side of the Orange river.’ They were continuously on his mind and he eventually asked the Rhenish Mission Society to start a work among them. He had heard about the Ovambos who lived far in the north and he used to pray for them every day! He never knew that his descendants into the third and fourth generation would work among the Ovambos! But God is faithful. He answers prayer - even after the death of his servants!

Schmelen died on the 26<sup>th</sup> July 1848. His son-in-law Franz Heinrich Kleinschmidt writes: ‘His end was filled with the peace of God, and his last words were spoken in glad anticipation: “The Lord is nearby, the Lord is nearby!”’

Two months before his death, he had preached for the last time in spite of being already greatly weakened. His life had been a hard one, but for 38 years he had preached the gospel as a faithful servant in God’s service. The Lord accordingly put his seal upon this work, although much of it was seen only in the reaping of those that came after him.

Steinkopf wrote this about Schmelen: ‘Although he did not fight with fire and the sword, he fought with the Word of God and with an iron will against innumerable obstacles in a strange, pagan world, in which not only faith, but also the courage of a tested and proven man was needed. Schmelen’s sowing has produced great fruit. Others harvested where he had planted, but what does it matter ... and who was equal to him in the sowing of the gospel?’<sup>12</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Schmelen is undoubtedly the father of missions in Namibia. The explorer Anderson described him as, ‘the most gifted and most enterprising of missionaries that ever set foot on African soil’.<sup>13</sup> Very few modern missionaries today would dare to live as ruggedly as Schmelen did. He knew the importance of the indigenous language and although he never completed a full translation of the

Bible in Nama which is a very complex language, he nevertheless laid the foundations for further translation work. Professor Haacke of the University of Namibia (UNAM - 1989) rightly called Schmelen 'the real pioneer of Nama literature'.<sup>14</sup>

Schmelen was passionate about the preaching of the gospel to all the peoples of Namibia. Walter Moritz, Schmelen's biographer, testifies: 'His main work consisted in the preaching of God's Word. His aim was to bring the gospel not only to the Namas on the other side of the Orange river (i.e. Namibia), but he also wanted to reach the Herero, Damara and Ovambo nations.' Besides the primacy of preaching Schmelen was a man of prayer. He prayed always for the people he wanted to reach with the gospel of Christ.

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<sup>1</sup> Buys and Nambala, p. 42

<sup>2</sup> Missionary Schmelen - Heft 17 – Walter Moritz p.17 (translated by J.Rieck)

<sup>3</sup> This area is known today as Namaqualand

<sup>4</sup> Named after a town in Macedonia called Pella which became a refuge from persecution for the early Christians

<sup>5</sup> Moritz, p. 20

<sup>6</sup> A name pronounced with click sounds in the Nama language

<sup>7</sup> Moritz, pp. 22,23

<sup>8</sup> Moritz, pp. 23,24

<sup>9</sup> Moritz, p. 41

<sup>10</sup> See RT 204

<sup>11</sup> Nakambale : The life of Dr Martin Rautanen: Publisher FELM 2002

<sup>12</sup> Moritz, p. 43

<sup>13</sup> Buys and Nambala, p. 12 quoting A D Watts in an unpublished M A. dissertation entitled 'The early explorers and hunters in South West Africa during the years 1760 –1886'.

<sup>14</sup> Missionary Schmelen - Heft 17 – Moritz, p. 43



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# The Battle for Christianity in Great Britain

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*Editor*

The United Kingdom (58 million) is part of the European Union which in 2005 consisted of 25 nations. The larger of these are Germany (82 million), France (59 million), Italy (57 million), Spain (39 million) and Poland (38 million). Some of these countries involved are the most poverty-stricken, spiritually speaking, in the world today. Even the rather optimistic statistics cited from *Operation World* show a pitiful proportion of evangelicals: Italy 0.9%, Spain 0.4%, and France 0.8%. Nothing but a heaven-sent spiritual awakening will remove the gross darkness that covers these nations, and only a God-given awakening will prevent Britain from sliding down into similar spiritual poverty.

A megashift in the way people in Western Europe think has taken place since the 1970s from modernism to postmodernism. An integral part of postmodern culture is a-morality, or to be more plain, selective morality. It is still deemed a crime to steal or to commit murder. However the commandment 'Thou shalt not commit adultery', is a part of God's law which is deleted. It is as though that commandment has been scraped out of the tablets of stone on which the ten commandments were written. Whereas in the previous generation pre-marital sex was regarded as adultery now it is the norm. Whereas marriage was regarded as the norm now it is not. This disregard for the biblical foundation of marriage and God's law which protects it has resulted in desperate damage to society.

A leading article in *The Daily Telegraph* (Sept 30, 2005) begins as follows, 'Marriage is in terminal decline, government figures showed yesterday. Within 25 years nearly half of all men in their mid-forties and more than a third of women will not have walked up the aisle.'

## **Reaping the whirlwind of Postmodernism**

The breakdown of family life has had catastrophic results on society. Politicians realise that this subject must be addressed. In the Conservative leadership contest which took place in November 2005 both David Davis and David Cameron placed this subject at the top of their political agendas. Davis declared, 'Families are the foundation stone of society. Tax and benefit systems must help, not hinder, the aim of stable families'. Cameron likewise placed the family at the top of his priorities. He declared that we must respond

to the challenge of social breakdown by actively supporting marriage through the tax and benefits system.

Bad doctrine and bad principles will result in bad life. So much has changed since the West moved away from a Christian base which though nominal still served to give a sense of stability and direction. 'It was only one generation ago that the Bible and the Ten Commandments were taught in our schools. There was discipline in the home and in the classroom. The parent supported the teacher. Common decency prevailed in the community. There was respect for authority in the home and in society. The extended family was a protection against crime. Divorce was rare and having a child out of wedlock was looked on as a scandal. Homosexuality was not so much as named among us. The press and the broadcasting authorities conformed to standards of morality and decency.'<sup>1</sup>

The most devastating effects of a Postmodern society and the permissive society of the 1960s that preceded it are the downgrading of marriage and the break up of family life. Now as we see from leading politicians downwards the custom is for couples to live together and perhaps consider marriage at a future time. Allied with that is a massive divorce rate now running at a terrifying fifty percent. The effects of this on children is appalling not to mention the destructive effects on the parents. Infidelity is the main reason leading to divorce. The media have contributed to decline. The programs that promote promiscuity and which border on pornography are destructive. Criticism is scorned by most program managers.

Peter Hitchens traces out the changing attitude that has taken place. 'Shame and stigma, which once both defended respectable marriage and heaped misery on the poor bastard and his wretched mother, have disappeared. Instead, there is the slower, vaguer more indirect misery of a society where fewer and fewer children have two parents, and where more and more women are married to the State.'<sup>2</sup> 'In the post-war years the number of births outside marriage actually dropped for thirteen years between 1945 and 1959. In 1959, the Legitimacy Act allowed post facto legitimacy to children whose parents had 'not been free' to marry at the time of their birth. These were humane changes ensuring that the sins of the parents could not be visited on the children. But they also made it easier for the parents to commit those sins without so much fear of the consequences, and they assumed that the old forces of shame and disgrace were purely negative, nasty cobwebs in the corner of an unreformed society which could have no possible purpose in the modern world.'<sup>3</sup> Major changes began in 1987 when a new abridged birth certificate allowed children to conceal their parents' unmarried status.

The demotion of the sacred institution of marriage and the family is seen in the increasing demand for the acceptance of different sexual lifestyles. The Civil Partnership Act took effect from December 2005 in which same sex couples have the same exemptions from Inheritance Tax as husbands and wives. Everyone has equal rights in this area. The recent decision of Parliament to allow homosexual and cohabiting couples to adopt children is an indication of how far some are pushing the equal rights agenda.

A-morality in society brings about a whole raft of painful results. There is the increase of teenage pregnancies, the increase of a variety of sexually transmitted diseases, permanent injury in the realm of trust and relationships. A further hurtful and damaging outcome is what is termed 'Dad's empty chair'. James Wilson of the USA media comments on Dad's empty chair like this: 'boys in father-absent families were twice as likely as those in two-parent ones to go to jail and girls in father-absent families were twice as likely as those in married families to have an out-of-wedlock birth. What all of this means for the rest of society is evident on the evening news programs. Boys without married fathers populate our street gangs, and these gangs are responsible for an inordinately high level of violence. We rely on the police to control gangs, but the important, and often absent, control is that exercised by fathers. A boy growing up without a father has no personal conception of what it means to acquire skills, find a job, support a family, and be loyal to one's wife and children. Research on the link between unemployment rates and crime has shown that the connection is very weak. The connection between crime and father absence is much higher. Boys in single-parent families are also more likely to be idle rather than in school or unemployed and to drop out of high school. These differences are as great for white families as for black and Hispanic ones and as large for advantaged children as for disadvantaged ones.'

Trouble has spilled out into schools in the UK. An area of enormous stress is the breakdown of respect in the classroom as John J Murray describes it, 'As happened with Rome before its fall, society is taking on coarseness. There is violence in the classroom. Teachers are leaving the profession due to stress. One teacher spoke about advice given to him: "We are being urged to give the kids Mars bars when they are walking around with iron bars." Teenagers engage in loutish behaviour. City streets are less safe, especially at nights. Some of our inner cities have been turned into no-go areas for the police. A chief constable said: "If a couple of parents cannot control their children, how can two of my men control 200?"' <sup>4</sup>

The apostle Paul said that godliness is the basis of righteousness, and unrighteousness flows out of ungodliness (Rom 1:18). What will be the outcome of the increase in alcoholism, drug addiction, violence and crime which evidences the spiritual bankruptcy of Postmodern Western society? Will the generation who have come from broken homes turn to the gospel, or will they continue to seek solace in the very sins which brought their parents and themselves into bondage and distress? Will they find new life in Christ, or be lured into the increasing array of cults or the occult?

Retired clergyman Dennis Peterson writes, 'The effect of disrupted families is disruptive child behaviour. One of the main reasons for teachers leaving the profession is despair at pupil behaviour. I met a young lad who had about a hundred scars on his back where he had been stabbed by things like compass points. A teacher recently burst into tears as she told me of the fear she has from violence in her school.'<sup>5</sup> During October 2005 newspapers published photos of a girl whose face had been slashed by knives by fellow girl pupils. That could be an isolated exceptional event but it is not. The increase of violence in schools is a national problem.

If the decline in morals and behaviour has taken place as described then surely this will reflect in the levels of crime recorded in England and Wales. This is a controversial field because of the possibility of manipulating statistics to prove a point. However there are basic trends which are inescapable. The level of crime increased fifty-fold from 1921 when 103,258 crimes were recorded to 5.2 million recorded cases of crime in 2001. Another statistic concerns the prison population. The prison population for England and Wales increased dramatically to 77,000 in 2005, a rise of 70 percent since 1993 when it was 44,500. In March 2005 82 of the 139 prisons in England and Wales were overcrowded.<sup>6</sup>

### **Decline of the churches**

From the moral decline in Great Britain we now turn to the state of the churches. The steep decline in church membership which is well illustrated in the graphs can be traced back to the rise of liberalism during the nineteenth century and the rejection of the Bible as a reliable book. Gradually moralistic teaching replaced the gospel of salvation from eternal damnation and wherever this has taken place certain demise has followed. Great Britain is increasingly a land of church buildings where once the gospel was preached but now those buildings have been turned into flats, offices or warehouses.

An apt commentary on Great Britain is found in Judges 2:10, 'After that whole generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation grew up, who knew neither the LORD nor what he had done for Israel.'

An examination of the graphs will show that the once thriving Methodist denomination is spiralling down to extinction. The same is true of the United Reformed Church.

The situation in the Church of England illustrates the point made above that the crucial issue is gospel preaching. There are thriving evangelical Anglican churches but there are not enough to withstand the overall decline. Up and down England there are more and more Anglican churches which are closing. Soon we are told fifty percent of the Anglican clergy will be women. That sends out a two-fold message. First the Scripture teaching about male leadership is unheeded and that usually means that a liberal view of Scripture prevails. Secondly it sends out a message that the Church is now so weak that there are insufficient men to lead. That confirms a state of serious decline and time and time again that decline proves to be terminal.

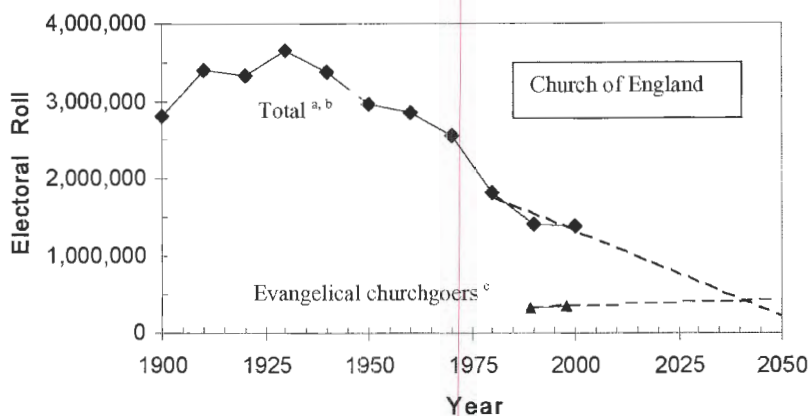
Similar to the Anglican Church is the Baptist Union denomination. The Baptist Union consists of a mixture of liberal and evangelical pastors and women pastors. Unless held together by strong social ties the liberal churches will decline since there is no gospel to draw sinners to be saved. The evangelical churches vary in quality but the Baptist Union as a whole is in decline as the graph shows.

Where evangelicalism in a nation is thriving it is hard for the cults to grow because the light of the gospel shines brightly so that denial of the deity of Jesus is hard to promote. The graphs show the rapid growth of Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons.

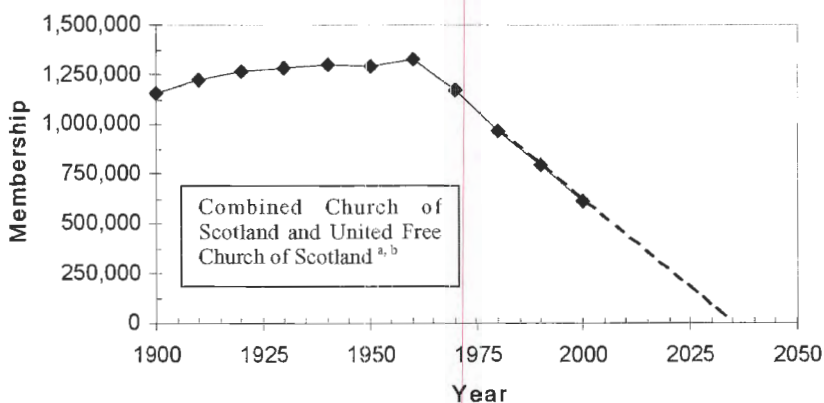
The Pentecostal denominations show a gradual growth. The Grace Baptists and their next of kin the Reformed Baptists form a small part of evangelicalism. The Reformed Baptists are less traditional in style and many of their churches show healthy growth. Many small Grace churches are ageing and are unlikely to survive. There are exceptions. Where a new pastor takes over in a church and evangelises energetically the recovery is often remarkable.

### **Commentary on the graphs**

The graphs show membership of churches and other religious groups for the 20th century and a prediction for the next 50 years. These graphs are not meant to be exhaustive as regards religious groups but provide a snapshot of the main trends occurring in Great Britain.

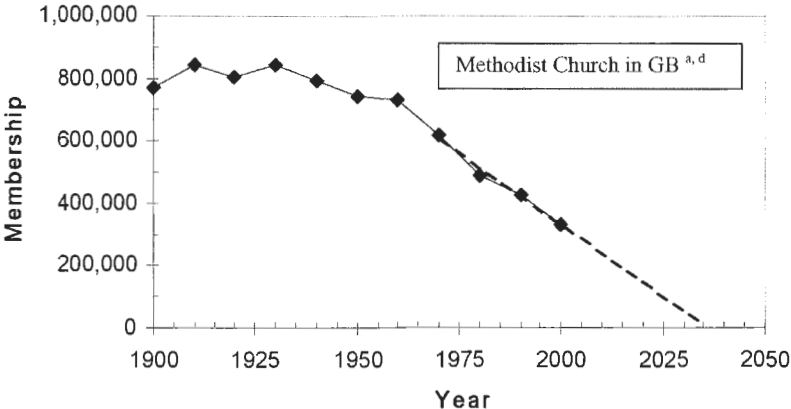


**The Church of England.** In an article in *The Churchman* (Summer 2005) retired clergyman Dennis Peterson laments the fact that we have lost sight of the 1859-60 revival in England in which the membership of the Church of England grew phenomenally from 18 percent of the population to 27 percent. This fact in itself reminds us that only an outpouring of the Holy Spirit can bring about a radical change. It is the preaching of the gospel alone that makes the difference. There is no hope for denominations which have been taken over by liberals who deny the principal doctrines of the Bible. It is the presence of vibrant evangelical churches within the Anglican body that moderates the decline. The nominal part of the Church of England is fading away at such a pace that eventually only the evangelical constituency will be left to function in any realistic way. There is a major crisis in the Anglican communion because funding is running out to maintain the fabric of empty churches all over the land.

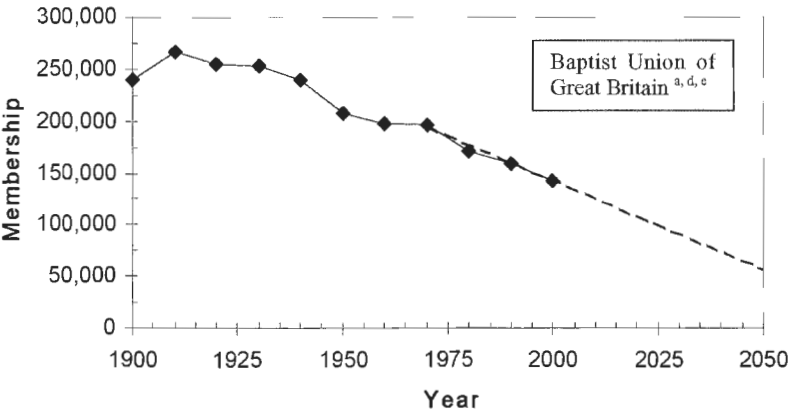




**Church of Scotland.** About thirty years ago a story was spread that all the evangelical ministers in the Church of Scotland combined would be able to fit into a telephone box. Yet through the ministry of several leaders such as William Still the proportion of evangelical ministers increased to about forty percent. That might be over optimistic. Today it may be much less. The decline certainly is very evident from the graph.

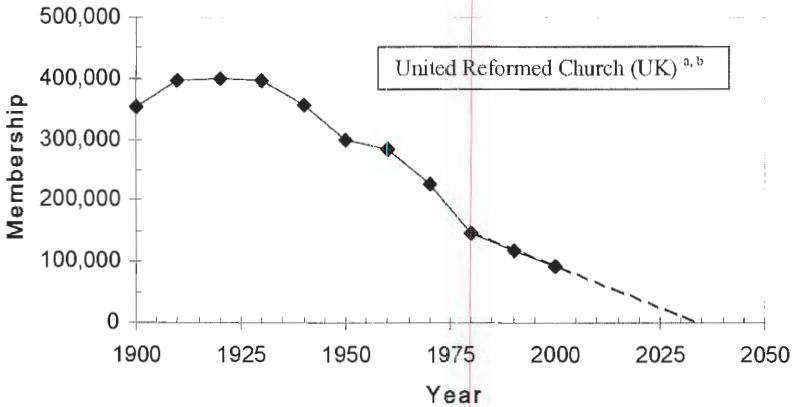


**The Methodists.** The decline of Methodism is dramatic. Since the saving gospel of Christ has been abandoned it is visibly evident that the Holy Spirit has abandoned this denomination. Methodist church buildings all over the land have been sold to be turned into other purposes.

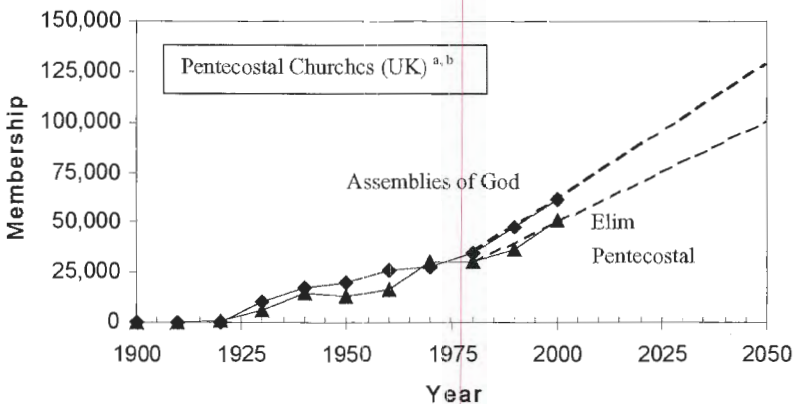


**The Baptist Union.** Since the Downgrade Controversy of 1887 –1892 in which C H Spurgeon was the leader of the evangelical Baptists there has been no change in the BU. The BU leaders have not come to grips with the need of reformation. That is impossible because liberals occupy the seats of influence

and power. For instance when Michael Taylor used the platform of the annual BU assembly in 1971 to deny the deity of Christ no discipline was exercised. At least twenty churches seceded from the Union. What security is there for future generations when there is no guarantee of doctrinal fidelity? Baptist Unions vary from country to country. In South Africa the battle with the unbelieving liberals was won in the 1920s. Fidelity to the Word of God has followed ever since.

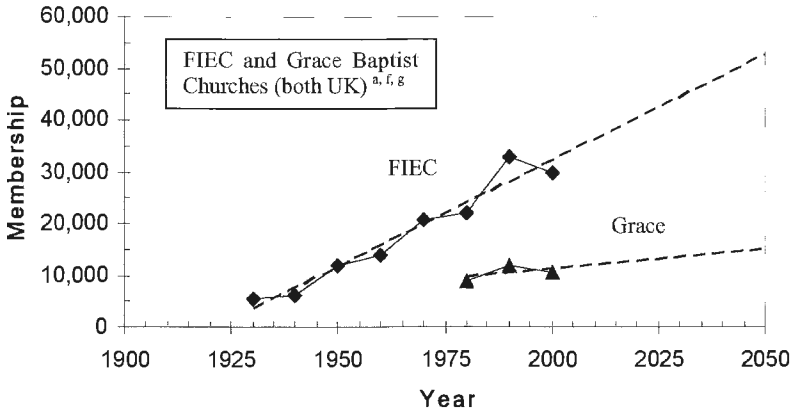


**The United Reformed Church.** This body too has been invaded by modernist theology. It is only a matter of time before this denomination becomes extinct.

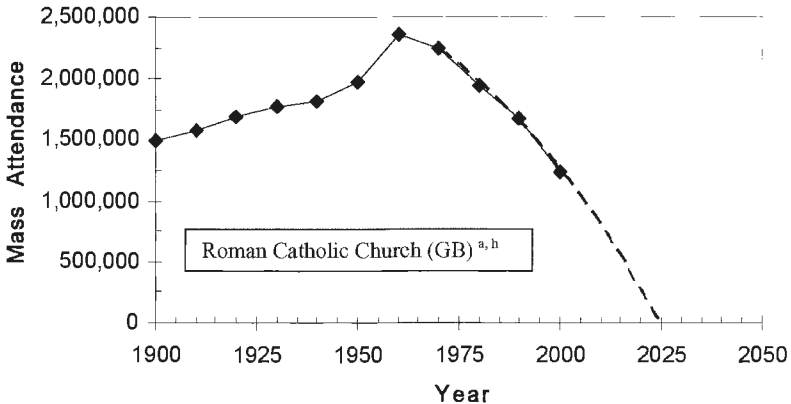


**The Pentecostal denominations.** The graphs of the two largest Pentecostal Churches show growth. We are reminded by this that when the gospel is preached with zeal and where there is concerted evangelism there will be

growth. There are many other, smaller, charismatic groupings not shown which also show growth.

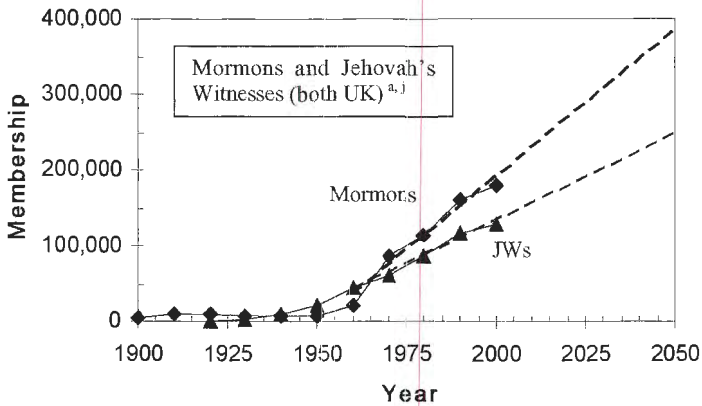


**FIEC (Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches), Grace Baptist and Reformed Baptist churches.** The graphs for the FIEC show an encouraging upward trend. The manner in which unity among evangelical churches has spread is heartening. According to Psalm 133 where there is unity in the truth there the Lord bestows his blessing. Closely allied to the FIEC are Grace Baptists and Reformed Baptists. Contemporaneity is a major issue in these churches. Where leaders cling to Scripture and at the same time encourage young people there is growth whereas where strict tradition for tradition's sake is maintained there sterility prevails. The saying is true that a reformed church always needs to reform testing everything in the light of Scripture.

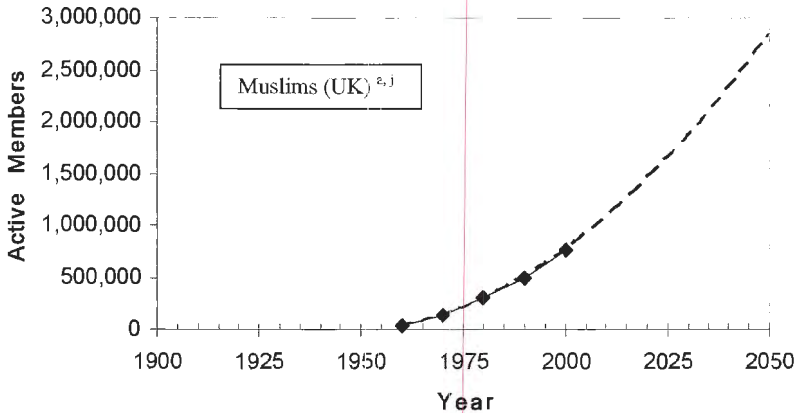


**Roman Catholicism** The decline of Roman Catholicism is widespread in Western Europe especially in France and Great Britain. The RC Church has served to keep families cemented. Spain is an example. But Catholic influence

is waning in Spain too. Spain, once a bastion of Catholic culture and commitment, has now embraced same-sex marriage. Spain became the third country to legalize gay marriage.



**Mormons and JWs.** When the light of the gospel shines brightly it is difficult for cults to grow. When there is biblical illiteracy such as prevails in the UK today there the cults have a free hand.



**Islam.** The increase of Muslims is mostly by large families and by immigration.

What possibility is there of revival in such an age of decadence as our own? We must not forget the situation that preceded the eighteenth-century Awakening. We have liberalism; they had deism. We have the drug menace; they had rum. We have abortion; they had the degradation of the slave trade. We have contempt for the gospel, especially in places of influence; so did they.

We have bishops who tolerate practising homosexuals in the ministry and the blatant public denial of the deity of Christ by one of their number; eighteenth-century Britain also suffered a lethargic clergy. Yet in spite of all the obstacles the Holy Spirit intervened in a marvelous way, using humble prayers and a handful of godly leaders.

If ever we should seek to unite in prayer for revival it is now! The social decadence of our Western world demands it.

### Footnotes to graphs

A. Graphs drawn using data obtained from 'UK Christian Handbook Religious Trends No.2 2000/01' Ed Dr Peter Brierley Published 1999 by Christian Research, London ISBN 1853211346, and 'UK Christian Handbook Religious Trends No.4 2003/2004' Ed Dr Peter Brierley Published 2003 by Christian Research, London ISBN 1853211494. Figures for Northern Ireland are generally excluded as it is relatively small and not typical of the rest of the UK.

B. Prediction is obtained by drawing a linear best fit line through the values for the years 1980 – 2000

C. Values for evangelical churchgoers were calculated using data from 'Coming Up Trumps' by Peter Brierley. Published 2004 by Authentic Media, Milton Keynes ISBN 1850785481. Prediction is obtained by drawing a linear best fit line through the values for the years 1989 – 1998

D. Prediction is obtained by drawing a linear best fit line through the values for the years 1970 – 2000

E. Additional information obtained from Baptist Union, Didcot, UK

F. Prediction for FIEC is obtained by drawing a linear best fit line through the values for the years 1930 – 2000

G. Prediction for Grace Baptist Churches is obtained by drawing a linear best fit line through the values for the years 1980 – 2000

H. Prediction is obtained by drawing a curve (second order polynomial) through the values for the years 1970 – 2000

J. Prediction is obtained by drawing a curve (second order polynomial) through the values for the years 1960 - 2000

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<sup>1</sup> J J Murray in *Where is God now Gone? The Present State of Church and Nation*. Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) 2003.

<sup>2</sup> Peter Hitchens, *The Abolition of Britain – From Lady Chatterley to Tony Blair*, Quartet 1999, page 177 ff.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid* page 185.

<sup>4</sup> *J J Murray, ibid* page 7.

<sup>5</sup> *The Churchman*, Summer 2005.

<sup>6</sup> Documentation for crime and prison population can be found on [www.reform.co.uk](http://www.reform.co.uk)

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## The IFRB

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The term 'Reformed Baptist' began to be used in the 1970s. Some Presbyterians argue that Baptists should not be described as 'Reformed'. However the Baptists of the 17th century settled that question by using the Westminster Confession of Faith as the basis for the Second London Baptist Confession of Faith (formulated in 1677 and published in 1689). The story of the 1689 Confession is described in 'Our Baptist Heritage'.<sup>1</sup>

It is vitally important to have a robust Confession of Faith.<sup>2</sup> The graphs in this issue of *Reformation Today* illustrate how whole denominations have lost their way because of doctrinal drift. The 1689 Confession preserved the Christological gains of the early centuries, proclaimed the gospel of justification by faith won back in the 16th-reformation, and outlined the central doctrines of our faith so ably expounded by the English Puritans.

During the reformed theological renewal of the 1960s and 1970s, increasing numbers of Baptists adopted the 1689 Confession as their doctrinal basis. Since that time it has been published in a number of languages, and those who have embraced its doctrinal position have multiplied. The International Fellowship of Reformed Baptists was formed in 1990 in order to promote unity among Reformed Baptists round the world, and to encourage those who are isolated. The privileged who live where literature and other resources are easily available have a responsibility to encourage those who are discovering our spiritual legacies for the first time. We are in contact with

Reformed Baptists from about fifty countries, but would like to double that number. For instance the first ever Reformed Baptist Church has just begun in Botswana.

Any individual subscriber to *Reformation Today* can join IFRB providing he or she is in good standing with an evangelical church. Membership is free. There is no charge. The doctrinal basis is the doctrines of grace as expressed in the 1689 Confession of Faith. The ethos of IFRB is one of catholicity. Before anything else a Christian is a member of the Body of Christ, the universal Church. But all believers are obligated to belong to a local church. For want of a reformed ministry many Baptists are integrated with Presbyterian churches. That in no way precludes individual membership of IFRB.

What are the advantages of belonging? One advantage is a sense of unity in the truth. The second is news. A newsletter is circulated with every issue of *Reformation Today*. The membership list is not to be used for solicitation of funds or for advancing divisive issues. To join the IFRB, contact your regional RT agent. In addition, we would encourage readers to subscribe for a missionary to receive *Reformation Today* and thus to introduce IFRB.

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<sup>1</sup> *Our Baptist Heritage*, paperback 117 pages, is obtainable free from Chapel Library, 2603W. Wright Street, PENSACOLA, FL 32505, USA

<sup>2</sup> See article *The Vital Importance of the Confession*, RT 207



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## Book Reviews

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*Bill James*

### **A Generous Orthodoxy**

Brian D McLaren

Zondervan, 2004, 297pp, hc.

ISBN 0310257476

Brian McLaren is the founding pastor of Cedar Ridge Community church, USA, and an influential leader in the 'Emerging Church' movement. This book is something of a manifesto of his beliefs, and we very quickly discover that his convictions transcend traditional categories. On the front cover of the book, the subtitle tells it all: 'Why I am a missional evangelical post/protestant liberal/conservative mystical/poetic biblical charismatic/contemplative fundamentalist/calvinist anabaptist/anglican methodist catholic green incarnational depressed-yet-hopeful emergent unfinished Christian.' (These adjectives all become chapter headings in the book).

In his introduction McLaren laments the sad history of so much of the church. He refers to crusades, witch trials, bigotry, politicised religion, and the rest. So he proclaims his desire just to get back to the simple message of Jesus. He professes to have roots in Scripture, and is happy to assent to the Apostles' and Nicene creed, but is reluctant to draw any lines on 'secondary' issues. So he trawls through the different versions of Jesus that he has found in conservative protestant, pentecostal, Roman catholic, Eastern orthodox, liberal protestant, anabaptist and liberation theology circles - and embraces what he finds good in all of them. He wants us to imbibe a little bit of everything, in much the same way that we would eat food from different cultures.

There is of course something very helpful in this broad survey. It can be a stimulating exercise to step outside of your own tradition and see what is good in the views and practices of others. But ultimately, if we are seekers after truth, all must be assessed and judged at the bar of Scripture. This should be the touchstone of all our beliefs and practices, both in content and emphasis. And even in the opening chapters of this book there is the uncomfortable sense that McLaren is picking out those strands of tradition that he feels comfortable with, or which are appealing and acceptable to our

postmodern world. In other words, we are looking for a Jesus that feels right for us.

This is the ultimate postmodern creed for Christians. McLaren is also postmodern in his attitude to institutions; in short he doesn't like them. While he seems uncritical of the theology of different strands of Christian tradition, he opposes the denominational and tribal structures which make up the professing church. He sees how easily power and authority can corrupt, and so often be associated with tribalism, special interest groups, and most of all sectarianism and division. His desire is for a 'learning community', in a master-apprentice relationship with Christ.

We are now introduced to the author's views on central aspects of Christian faith. On the deity of Christ McLaren speaks of Jesus 'carrying the essence of God', and, that those around him knew that they were experiencing God. So there is much about God being revealed to us in Jesus. But then, strangely, McLaren embarks on an extended apology for using male pronouns to refer to God. He is right of course that God is neither male nor female; but are we to say then that Jesus was wrong to teach us to pray to the 'Father', or even to be incarnate as a man rather than a woman? Once again it seems that the ultimate bar of 'truth' is not really Scripture, or even Christ, but what we find acceptable in our postmodern age.

On salvation he rejects the too-narrow categories of saving souls, or saving from hell. Rather he sees salvation as 'getting out of trouble' whether that be 'sickness, war, political intrigue, oppression, poverty, imprisonment, or any kind of danger or evil'. p.93. (Is it accidental that sin is not even mentioned in this list?) He believes that in dying and rising Jesus has 'snipped the ring' of selfishness, greed, lust, injustice, etc, which has gripped the whole species of the human race, so that now we are able to develop in a positive and healthy way.

As a 'missional' Christian, McLaren is concerned that the church should be reaching out to the world, but he does not feel qualified to comment as to whether everyone will get to heaven - and he doesn't feel that is the right question anyway (p.112). As an 'evangelical' he loves that passion for spiritual understanding, experience, and mission. He is 'protestant' not because that is a protest against anything (obviously he is uncomfortable with that) but because it can be a positive testimony to something better. And so we might go on.

The vision of the emerging church is not so much to stand on the shoulders of the Christian traditions of the past as to evolve from all of them into a new

and greater orthodoxy. The enemy is modernist thought which presents 'orthodoxy' as 'nailed down, freeze-dried, and shrink-wrapped forever'. (p.286). So McLaren is still emerging, and still unfinished. My only question is if he will ever arrive, and if so where? Without any secure foundations in Scripture, without a realistic doctrine of sin or clarity about salvation, without a grasp of final judgment, his aim is ambitious but I fear his journey is naïve and ill-conceived.

### **Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church**

D. A. Carson

Zondervan 2005, 250pp, pb.

ISBN 0310259479

What is the 'Emerging Church?' If you want to know the answer to that question, and to understand some of the issues in short compass, then this is the book for you. It should be in every pastor's library.

The most difficult task is that of definition. The 'Emerging Church' (hereafter EC) is perhaps best explained by Carson as a protest movement, first against traditional orthodoxy with its linear thought and rigid creeds and statements of faith. Then against authority structures, mega churches, denominations and power bases of church life. So this is a grouping which, by definition, is very broad in its convictions and without clear structures or boundaries. It is characterised by a commitment to 'belonging' before 'believing'.

Carson's first response to the movement is positive; the EC has engaged with contemporary (postmodern) culture, and therefore helps us to reflect on how we engage with the world today. First it is valuable to see how our culture longs, more than anything else, for authenticity. If they are to see value in Christian faith, then they must see reality in the lives of Christians; there has to be authenticity in Christian meetings, Bible studies, and services - not just a tired rehearsal of traditional forms. It is here that the EC is trying to engage with a pagan world, by presenting the real Jesus in a personal (rather than a highly structured and traditional) setting.

However, this raises serious criticisms of the EC. In order to attain the noble goal of speaking to our postmodern world, is it necessary to be so comprehensively dismissive of all 'modern' thought? Their assessment of modernism is a caricature, making out that all is wooden, cerebral, linear and objective. (As in McLaren's description of systematic theology as 'nailed down, freeze-dried, and shrink-wrapped forever' - review above). And along

with a wholesale rejection of modernism, they reject confessional Christianity. Yet Spurgeon is full of biblical truth and doctrine, but also passion, power and personal appeal. Packer is a systematic theologian, yet his best-selling *Knowing God* is popular because of its spirituality. The EC forces a choice of 'either/or' rather than seeing that authentic faith is rooted in a holistic reality of objective truth, personal relationship, experience, and godly living (heart, mind, soul and strength).

The rejection of modernism is also too often a rejection of absolutism. (Carson is particularly critical of McLaren at this point p.71, because he attributes all the evils of world history to absolutism.) Here there is a failure to distinguish between good and bad absolutism. It was absolutism against slavery in Britain that ended the trade; it was absolute opposition to Hitler that was required; not to mention the biblical absolutes against murder, adultery, and the command to repentance and faith in Christ.

Not only is EC overcritical of modernism; it fails to be critical in responding to postmodernism. Indeed, it seems to have drunk deeply of the contemporary suspicion of truth claims, and the reluctance to draw clear lines between what is right and wrong, who belongs and who does not. There is a failure to return to the Scriptures as the absolute standard against which all is to be judged. Carson points out the failure of EC writers even to face up to the question, 'Which religion is true?' (pp.132ff). And he offers an extended and most valuable critique of the emphasis on 'belonging before believing' (pp.146-155).

Included in this volume are critical reviews of McLaren's book *Generous Orthodoxy* pp.158-182 (see above), and Steve Chalke's *Lost Message of Jesus* which are considered to be most significant in this context. There is then a concluding section with biblical analysis and reflections. There is even a summary of Carson's response to postmodernism (simplified and condensed from his earlier work *The Gaggling of God*).

The great value of this book is not only a robust response to the weaknesses of EC, but also a willingness to reflect on our own relationship with a post-modern culture. It would be too easy to sneer at those who have become compromised by immersion in contemporary culture while in fact we are guilty of being so far divorced and out of touch that we are irrelevant. Our aim should be for faithfulness; that is in commitment to biblical godliness both in our distinctiveness from the world and our determination to engage with people and modern culture in a relevant way.

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**Editor** ERROLL HULSE, 75 Woodhill Road, Leeds LS16 7BZ  
**Assistant Editor** BILL JAMES, 9 Epsom Road, Leamington Spa CV32 7AR  
**Associate Editors** DAVID KINGDON, UK, TOM NETTLES, USA,  
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