

REFORMATION TODAY



MARCH - APRIL 2009

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African Pastors' Conferences



Orapa, Botswana
Second Conference due December 2009

Bulawayo, Zimbabwe
Third Conference due December 2009

Pretoria
Fourth Conference due Jan 2010

Barberton
Third Conference due May 2009

Welkom, Free State
Third Conference due January 2010

Mseleni, Kwazulu
Third Conference due Jan 2010

Newcastle, Kwazulu
Second Conference due January 2010

Koinonia, Hillcrest, Kwazulu
Fifth Conference due January 2010

Capetown
First Conference due April 2009

Port Elizabeth
Fourth Conference due January 2010

East London
Second Conference due April 2009



Editorial

The breakdown of family life continues apace in the United Kingdom. As the nation moves further and further away from her Christian heritage so humanism and immorality take over. As divorce becomes more common so children suffer. The point is being reached where the number of couples living together will exceed the number of those who are married.

This subject of marriage and the family is helpfully addressed in this issue as we are taken back to Martin Luther and his marriage to Katharina.

With permission from GRACE magazine there is a review of a contemporary book on marriage. We are thankful for Brian Beevers' review of the classic work of John Owen on the subject of the mortification of sin now re-published in a most attractive format. This is a fine summary of Owen's teaching. It encapsulates the thrust of John Owen's exposition which is heart-searching and practical. Mortification of sin is essential for every believer. Brian Beevers reminds us that 'These works are classics on their subject and I don't think that there is anything to compare with them, certainly nothing so profound or penetrating.'

In this issue Bob Davey continues his series on the history of Protestant Christianity in China (Part Five).

John Benton, editor of *Evangelicals Now*, has kindly allowed us to use his report of the Carey Conference which took place in January. Bill James is

Front Cover – *This is Jan Steen's painting, St Nicholas Eve, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. It depicts the preparation of a Dutch family for the celebration of St Nicholas. A photograph would never capture each member of a family of ten in such a way as to express simultaneously an ideal expression for each family member. An artist is free to do this. Starting with the small shoe in the foreground follow the V angles up through the painting. It is a masterpiece. Lucas Cranach as far as I know did not attempt to paint Luther's extended family.*

Websites

www.reformation-today.org

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

<http://africanpastorsconference.com>

one of the leaders in organising the Carey Conference. For several years he has acted as chairman for the *Reformation Today Trust*. Such is his workload that he has resigned from that position and from his work as assistant editor. John Rubens has agreed to act as chairman of the RTT. The work will be divided into three parts: the Carey Conferences, *Reformation Today* magazine and literature, and the African Pastors' Conferences. The latter work is prospering in an extraordinary way as will be seen from the report by Gary Morrison and from the details spread out on the front inside cover.

Bill will continue to participate in organising the Carey Conference and acting as chairman there. The editor owes much to Bill for his work. The good news is that Emmanuel Evangelical Church in Leamington Spa has grown steadily year by year. Leadership of a church with well over a hundred members requires much spiritual energy which restricts time for extra tasks. With regard to book reviews there are so many books now that even the leading learned journals cannot keep up with them all. Our policy is to select and commend the most relevant and most useful books.

The editor apologises for the entrance of spam slipping through the net into RT 227, namely, the section on page three under the heading How to Vote. We will redouble our efforts to resist this menace. We have constantly to guard our pcs from spam and our telephone lines and be discerning about begging letters. With regard to the latter if there is an element of doubt our policy is to check the local situation through pastors who live in the vicinity from where the letter comes.

Herodotus, historian of the fifth century BC (author of the history of the Persian wars) and Thucydides (fifth century BC), the greatest of the Greek historians and author of the *History of the Peloponnesian Wars* had to discern between reality and stories (myth or spam). John Stott in his commentary on Acts (IVP, 1990) provides an excellent four-page introductory section on Luke the historian. He draws attention to destructive critics who have sought to undermine our confidence in Luke. In fact Luke in his Gospel and the book of Acts has proved to be completely reliable. We attribute that not only to his diligence in checking the facts (Luke 1:3) but to the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Reformation for the Family

By Mark D Thompson

We take it for granted that our pastors are usually the husband of one wife with a clutch of kids running around. But as Mark Thompson points out, our view of family – particularly clergy families – finds its roots in the Reformation revolution.

The Reformation was not a mere academic debate about obscure Christian doctrines; it transformed the worldview of those who came into contact with it. The evangelicals (as they were called and called themselves) did church differently, approached secular employment differently and regarded family life differently. Walk into a home in early sixteenth-century Europe and you could tell whether the household was Protestant or Catholic because what Christians believed made a radical difference to their everyday behaviour.

Family life was revolutionized forever as the Christian life became focussed, not on the ideals of separation, seclusion and self-denial (ideals associated, at least in theory, with monks and nuns), but on the domestic and social spheres of home, work and relationships. Women regained a dignity often obscured by the writings of celibate male theologians; instead of being regarded as an incomplete, defective part of creation, they were once again prized and respected as covenant partners, the spiritual equal of men. Marriage and sex ceased to be seen as a concession to human lust for those who could not attain chastity; instead they were valued as good gifts of creation which provided an avenue for godly living in the service of others.¹ And pastors of churches were transformed from elevated distant figures to common participants in everyday life.

This last aspect is particularly significant. When Luther followed his own advice and married Katharina von Bora on 13 June 1525, it was nothing less than scandalous and gave the enemies of the Reformation the break they had been looking for. Luther's marriage seemed to confirm what they had been saying all along: the Reformation was all about sex and the moral failure of Luther and others who could not attain the celibacy required of genuine servants of Christ. This slander was spread everywhere in Europe. Many started to wonder whether it were true. Even Philip Melancthon,

Luther's friend and fellow Reformer in Wittenberg, was not entirely convinced that Luther's marriage was a good idea. To him it seemed that the great man had degraded himself just at the moment when his authority was most needed. (1525 was, after all, a year of crisis for the Reformation on a number of counts.)² And yet Luther himself was convinced that it was a good thing which gave him the chance to put his theology into practice and spite the devil in the name of God. It has often been said that 'Luther's marriage remains to this day the central evangelical symbol of the Reformation's liberation and transformation of everyday life.'³

From our vantage point it is difficult to see what all the fuss was about. The world did not come to an end and Christian ministry did not suddenly become less effective when the clergy began to marry. But it is worth remembering that, as well as bringing about renewed theological vision, the Reformation initiated massive social upheaval. The emptying of nunneries and monasteries was tumultuous enough, but in addition to this was the emergence of a completely new phenomenon in the Christian West: the clergy family. As one prominent historian has put it:

No institutional change brought about by the Reformation was more visible, responsive to late medieval pleas for reform, and conducive to new social attitudes than the marriage of Protestant clergy. Nor was there any point in the Protestant program where theology and practice corresponded more successfully.⁴

Amongst the Saxon and Swiss Reformers clerical marriage would become as prominent a characteristic as their tenacious defence of the doctrine of justification by faith alone.⁵ This was no incidental consequence. However, to gain some sense of the revolution that took place in the years surrounding 1525 and the reasons why it was so important, we need to understand what had been the norm for almost a millennium prior to the Reformation.

Marriage and the priesthood in the medieval churches

The clergy of the medieval period were, at least in theory, celibate. This was part of their service to God. They were to remain free from the cares of this world so that they could serve the interests of the next. Had not the Apostle Paul advised as much in his first letter to the Corinthians?⁶

Yet celibacy for the clergy was more than simply a pragmatic decision. According to most medieval theologians, the purity of the soul was at



Martin Luther and Katharina

stake. Sexual activity, even when confined to marriage, was inextricably tied to lust and the pollution of the flesh.⁷ The person who desired to be close to God and be pure as Christ is pure must refrain from all such behaviour. Jerome even went as far as to say, 'Marriages fill the earth but virginity fills heaven.'⁸ Refraining from marriage became a test of whether you were really serious about serving God and his Church.

It is not surprising, then, that the medieval Church came to view the celibate life as a meritorious work for salvation.⁹ Abstinence and self-denial were indispensable elements in Christian piety, standing in stark contrast to the lesser form expressed in the lives of ordinary believers. Indeed, in some measure, the salvation of ordinary believers was dependent upon those who followed Christ's example to become dispensers of his grace. The prayers of priests and monks were considered more effective than those of ordinary men and women. What's more, true lay devotion modelled itself on their piety.¹⁰

In this environment, where the virtues of celibacy and self-denial were extolled, it was only a small step to denigrate marriage and human sexuality. Early in his career Luther spoke of how the institution of marriage was in as much need of reform as the Church. He noted that hardly any of the Church Fathers (or any of his contemporaries, for that matter) had a good word to say about it.¹¹ In 1522 he said,

What we would speak most of is the fact that the estate of marriage has universally fallen into awful disrepute. There are many pagan books which treat of nothing but the depravity of womankind and the

unhappiness of the estate of marriage, such that some have thought that even if Wisdom itself were a woman one should not marry.¹²

Part of this attitude can be traced to patristic views of sin, especially those associated with Augustine.¹³ Sexual desire was rarely (if ever) distinguished from pure lust, and lust came to be seen as a supreme example of concupiscence, that inwardly-turned selfish desire which lies at the heart of all sin.

From here it was only a small step to the denigration of women. Aristotle's notorious suggestion that women were in fact 'botched males' didn't help.¹⁴ Neither did the regular portrayal of women as temptresses, luring their victims into carnal pleasures and damnation. In addition, the largely patriarchal structures of European society reinforced the idea that women were inferior, and even dangerous, by denying women the same legal protections and opportunities it afforded its male citizens.

There were, of course, exceptions. Wealthy and well-bred women like Marguerite of Angoulême and Catherine de Medici could act as sponsors for artists, men of letters and even religious radicals. Not all women were despised and not all men of the period were misogynists. Yet the fact remains that, alongside a denigration of marriage, there was a general devaluation and even suspicion of women.

Yet none of these attitudes reduced the level of sexual activity, even among the supposedly chaste clergy, monks and nuns. Notorious cases (such as the rampant immorality of Pope Alexander VI) fuelled cynicism about the holiness of the clergy and came to feature prominently in pamphlets and other popular literature. Luther spoke regularly about the struggle for chastity, even in the monasteries. One writer, summarizing the situation, wrote, '[T]he practice of priests having concubines and illegitimate children was neither unusual nor an obstacle to clerical advancement'.¹⁵ Over time this practice provided an important source of income for the local bishops. Their greed, Luther suggested, was one reason why the Roman Church refused to act upon the regular calls to abandon clerical celibacy. In 1522, he wrote,

Do not most bishops derive a large part of their annual income from the fees collected from the priests' concubines? Whoever desires to have such a woman is obligated to pay the bishop at least a gulden a year. From this practice originates the common saying, 'Chaste priests are the bishops' worst enemies.' How can the procurers



Essential to family life is time for recreation. Keith Noldt of Australia sent this photo of three of his grandsons leaping into the sea.

become any richer than our own bishops? Who would ever have thought that our spiritual fathers could permit such sexual promiscuity and deny their priests the right to marry just for the sake of money? Truly there are many forms of madness!¹⁶

In theory, then, priests were celibate and marriage was for those who could not exercise the self-control needed to serve God in this way.

The source of change

Against such a background it is easy to see how the change brought by the Reformers radically transformed attitudes towards marriage and family life in general. Yet this transformation did not take place purely for social or cultural reasons, and it was not an attempt to right the practical wrongs associated with the devaluation of marriage and the denigration of women (though this was certainly a welcome effect). For men like Luther and Calvin this change had a distinctively theological edge; it flowed from a new understanding of how men and women are to relate to the God of grace.

The Reformers challenged the prevailing medieval view that Christians are meant to relate to God sacramentally, through priestly acts which conveyed

spiritual benefit on ordinary men and women. Any suggestion that priests and monks were, by virtue of their vows and lifestyle, closer to God or indeed more like God, was ridiculed in the strongest terms. Being close to God – being acceptable to God – was not a human achievement in any sense or the privilege of a special group. Luther protested that, if anything, these vows corrupted those who took them and confused those who did not. He insisted that compulsory vows of celibacy were ‘diametrically opposed to the gospel’¹⁷ and denied the popular notion that there are two distinct types of Christian living (one shaped by a separation and disengagement from the world, the other embroiled in its everyday concerns).¹⁸

In one sense, it seemed that the status of marriage was ‘demoted’ by the Reformers because it ceased to be a sacrament. Yet, in another more important sense, its status was elevated because it was now seen as being equal to (if not better than) the ideal of celibacy which had received such attention from the Church for a thousand years.¹⁹

What is more, the conscientious Christian did not need to divide his or her life into the secular and the sacred. Christian living is possible ‘in the world’ and cannot be attempted in isolation from it. God is certainly honoured by the faith and prayers of his people, but he is also honoured by the way married people live together, the way they rear their children and the way they go about their daily routine. Luther blew apart the traditional divide in a much-loved passage from his tract on *The Estate of Marriage* (written, significantly, some three years before his own marriage):

Now observe that when that clever harlot, our natural reason (which the pagans followed in trying to be most clever), takes a look at married life, she turns up her nose and says, ‘Alas, must I rock the baby, wash its diapers, make its bed, smell its stench, stay up nights with it, take care of it when it cries, heal its rashes and sores, and on top of that care for my wife, provide for her, labour at my trade, take care of this and take care of that, do this and do that, endure this and endure that, and whatever else of bitterness and drudgery married life involves? What, should I make such a prisoner of myself? O you poor, wretched fellow, have you taken a wife? Fie, fie upon such wretchedness and bitterness! It is better to remain free and lead a peaceful, carefree life; I will become a priest or a nun and compel my children to do likewise.’

What then does Christian faith say to this? It opens its eyes, looks upon all these insignificant, distasteful, and despised duties in the



Ron and Joan Adams and their family who live in Welkom, South Africa. Joan Adams (who has recently recovered from a course of chemotherapy) has a further extended family of eighty-five at Morning Star, a crèche for HIV positive children. Ron and Joan organise an annual African Pastors' Conference in Welkom (see report by Gary Morrison, page 15).

Spirit, and is aware that they are all adorned with divine approval as with the costliest gold and jewels. It says, 'O God, because I am certain that thou hast created me as a man and hast from my body begotten this child, I also know for a certainty that it meets with thy perfect pleasure. I confess to thee that I am not worthy to rock the little babe or wash its diapers, or to be entrusted with the care of the child and its mother. How is it that I, without any merit, have come to this distinction of being certain that I am serving thy most precious will? O how gladly will I do so, though the duties should be even more insignificant and despised. Neither frost nor heat, neither drudgery nor labor, will distress or dissuade me, for I am certain that it is thus pleasing in thy sight.'²⁰

And a couple of lines further down in the same tract, Luther wrote,

Now you tell me, when a father goes ahead and washes diapers or performs some other mean task for his child, and someone ridicules him as an effeminate fool – though that father is acting in the spirit just described and in the Christian faith – my dear fellow you tell me, which of the two is most keenly ridiculing the other? God, with all his angels and creatures, is smiling – not because the father is washing diapers, but because he is doing so in Christian faith. Those who sneer at him and see only the task but not the faith are ridiculing God with all his creatures, as the biggest fool on earth. Indeed, they are only ridiculing themselves; with all their cleverness they are nothing but devil's fools.²¹

As one modern scholar puts it,

Luther rejected every form of flight from the world with its suspicion of creation including the human body. Humankind is not called to flee the world but rather to engage the world for the common good. The concrete demonstration of the new faith very soon became clerical marriage ... the public rejection of mandatory clerical celibacy encompassed the new evangelical understanding of the relationship of God and the world.²²

Furthermore, the abandonment of clerical celibacy arose as well from a new evaluation of the Christian pastor. No longer was he to be seen as a priest in the sense of a holy man, distinct from ordinary believers. No longer was his activity to be seen as a quasi-magical conduit of special divine power – blessing in a way that others could not bless, praying with more effectiveness than others and doing what others could not do, bringing about the presence of God in the Mass. To quote Ozment, ‘Protestants viewed the ministry as an ethical service among spiritual equals, not a superior religious state,’ and, to a certain extent, this demanded that the walls erected by celibacy and other religious vows be broken down.²³ Far from being a distraction from genuine Christian ministry, the pastor’s own family life provided an important opportunity to exercise love and faithfulness towards his neighbours.

The ultimate case study: Martin and Katharina

Luther’s marriage to Katharina von Bora was shaped by these concerns. In contrast with the caricature drawn up by his opponents, there is evidence that Luther, while approving of marriage for the clergy in theory, was reluctant to move from theory to practice in his own experience. By 1525 all the other Wittenberg Reformers had married and Luther alone remained single and celibate. It was not that he placed some special importance upon himself and his actions. He explained his hesitation to his friend at court, Georg Spalatin, in late 1524:

According to my present frame of mind I have no intention of marrying; not that I am insensible to the emotions of the flesh, being neither wood nor stone, but because I have no desire to, and daily expect to die a heretic’s death. However, I shall not limit the power of the Lord working in me, nor depend on the stability of my own heart.²⁴

Luther changed his mind within the year. Katharina, the woman who would be his wife, had escaped from the Cistercian Convent at Nimbschen in April 1523 with eight other nuns. Since then she had been living in the

household of Luther's friend, the artist Lucas Cranach. She didn't immediately attract Luther's attention. In fact she was such a strong-willed woman, Luther could understand why she was the only one of the nine still unmarried two years later. Nevertheless, the marriage between Katharina and Luther would be a strong and happy one – a marriage which would be held up in the future as a model for the new Protestant clergy.

Katharina almost leaves the excellent woman of Proverbs 31 in the shade. She remodelled the old cloister that they lived in, transforming it into not only a family home but also accommodation for up to thirty students and guests. She repaired and extended the cloister garden and brought the brewery back into working order. In time her home-brewed beer was so famous that Luther took samples to the electoral court. Her day began at 4:00 am and she not only cared for Luther but ensured that the regular dining party of twenty to thirty people was well fed.²⁵ She acquired a small farm and raised domestic animals. Indeed, she gained somewhat of a reputation as a business woman in Wittenberg.

Through her marriage and the character of her household Katharina aided the demolition job that Luther had begun on the sacred/secular divide of medieval Catholicism. Even after the birth of six children there was never any sense of quarantining family life from the daily ministry of her husband. For his part, and in line with his pre-marital writings, Luther refused to separate them either. Their home remained an open one with a constant stream of guests and students. Luther maintained a frantic pace of writing, lecturing, and, as time went on, he even provided evangelical counsel to the political leaders who had embraced the Reformation. Nevertheless, there is not even a hint in the evidence that remains that Luther's family suffered from this intense exposure to the pressures and practicalities of Christian ministry. He spoke of how he enjoyed having his children romp at his feet while he worked and we have numerous letters and records of conversations revealing his tender care of his children and his devotion to his Katie.

Not that the marriage was an easy one. Both partners were strong-willed. Luther was notoriously temperamental. Yet Katie gave as good as she got and was more than once dubbed 'Lord Katie' by her husband. There were periods of financial hardship and there were gossip-mongers who tried to besmirch not only Luther's reputation, but that of his wife as well. When their second child, Elisabeth, died at eight months, Luther was devastated. Their third child, Magdalene, died in her early teens. Luther and Katharina knew sorrow and hardship – and life in the sixteenth century was full of both – but together they contributed to a whole new pattern of life, the life of the Christian clergy family.

Mark Thompson is Head of Theology at Moore Theological College, Sydney, Australia. His D. Phil. was on Martin Luther's doctrine of Scripture and his work is published in the book, *A Sure Ground on which to Stand: the relation of authority and interpretive method in Luther's approach to Scripture* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2004).

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- 1 The thought that a person could genuinely serve God in marriage was revolutionary. See C Lindberg, 'The Future of a Tradition: Luther and the Family', in Dean O Wenthe (ed.), *All Theology is Christology: Essays in Honor of David P Scaer*, Concordia Theological Seminary Press, Fort Wayne, 2000, pp. 133-151.
 - 2 W von Loewenich, *Martin Luther: The Man and His Work*, trans. Lawrence W Denef, Augsburg, Minneapolis, 1986, p. 279.
 - 3 W H Lazareth, *Luther on the Christian Home: An Application of Social Ethics of the Reformation*, Muhlenberg, Philadelphia, 1960, p. vii.
 - 4 S Ozment, *The Age of Reform 1250-1550: An Intellectual and Religious History of Later Medieval and Reformation Europe*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1980, p. 381.
 - 5 S Ozment, *Protestants: The Birth of a Revolution*, Doubleday, New York, 1992, p. 151.
 - 6 See 1 Cor 7:32-35.
 - 7 Ozment quotes a vernacular catechism from 1494 which includes a section entitled 'How the Laity Sin in the Marital Duty' (Ozment, *Protestants*, pp. 152-153).
 - 8 Ozment, *Protestants*, p. 153. Ozment draws attention to the retort of Luther's pastor, Johannes Bugenhagen: 'Faith, not virginity, fills paradise.' J Bugenhagen, *Vndem ehelichen Stande*, Wittenberg, 1525, pp. D 1a-3b.
 - 9 C Lindberg, 'Luther's struggle with socioethical issues', in Donald K McKim (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Martin Luther*, Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 168.
 - 10 As evidenced by movements such as the Brethren of the Common Life.
 - 11 Ozment, *Protestants*, pp. 151-152.
 - 12 M Luther, 'The Estate of Marriage' (1522), in J Pelikan and H T Lehmann (eds.), *Luther's Works*, XLV, Concordia, Saint Louis, 1955-1986, p. 36.
 - 13 See Augustine's *The City of God*.
 - 14 The impact of these views on medieval views of women is explored in I Maclean, *The Renaissance Notion of Woman: A Study in the Fortunes of Scholasticism and Medical Science in European Intellectual Life*, Cambridge University Press, 1980, pp. 9-10.
 - 15 Lindberg, 'The Future of a Tradition', pp. 133-151.
 - 16 Luther, *D Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe, Schriften* 10-2, p. 150.
 - 17 Luther, 'Judgement of Martin Luther on Monastic Vows' (1522), in *Luther's Works*, XLIV, p. 262.
 - 18 Luther, 'Monastic Vows', p. 285.
 - 19 H Hendrix, 'Luther on Marriage', *Lutheran Quarterly*, 14/3, 2000, p. 24.
 - 20 Luther, 'The Estate of Marriage', pp. 39-40.
 - 21 *ibid.*, pp. 40-41.
 - 22 Lindberg, 'Luther's Struggle', p. 168.
 - 23 Ozment, *The Age of Reform*, p. 390.
 - 24 In M A Currie, *The Letters of Martin Luther*, Macmillan, New York, 1908, p. 130.
 - 25 Ozment, *Protestants*, p. 160.

The Carey Conference



Tom Schreiner



Jerry Marcellino

This year sees the 500th anniversary of the birth of the great Reformer John Calvin. This fact was given top billing at the Carey Conference, the annual get-together of Reformed Baptists, at the Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, from January 6 to 8.

Despite the bad weather and illness sweeping many parts of the country, more people were there than ever, with extra chairs needed to seat everyone as Pastor David Ellis, from Stowmarket, began the conference. David, well-versed in the literature, gave a portrait of Calvin the man.

Emotional

Calvin was from Picardy, so apart from his astonishing intellect it should not

surprise us that he was actually a very tender-hearted and emotional man. Unsympathetic historians have grossly misrepresented his character over the years. Calvin's teaching produced communities which were pro-freedom.

He would have been pleased with the emergence of democracy. He put the great truths of God's revelation 'in their right place'.

So many troubles of the modern Church have come through truth being displaced, maximised or minimised inappropriately. Being a French speaker, Pastor Ellis was also able to give very illuminating, not to say humorous, insights into Calvin's use of language. This was a fine paper which deserves a wide audience.

Romans

The mainstay of the conference this year was Dr Tom Schreiner whose commentary on the Letter to the Romans has proved of enormous value to many preachers in recent years. Tom lectures at Southern Baptist Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. He is a gentle, thoughtful soul with a smiling face. He took us through three large sections of Romans and the listeners were entranced. The New Perspective on Paul came in for a kindly but devastating humbling at his hands.

Staying the course

The evening sessions were lively with Pastor Jerry Marcellino from Mississippi exhorting us to aim at long pastorates. Dr Stephen Lloyd, a Cambridge scientist now a pastor, gave a fine and thoughtful paper entitled 'From Darwin to Dawkins'. For the ladies, Paula Love covered the topic of one-to-one Bible studies and how to make the most of them, and Janet Cordle, with her nursing background, gave a paper on 'Dying Well'.

Carey is comparatively small on the scale of conferences. But in many ways it is the very best conference in Britain. There is an intimacy and depth of fellowship found in few other places. This year some of the question times were very moving as problems were shared. I felt I was among many unrecognised but wise princes of the church (Ecclesiastes 9.14-16).

John Benton

Recordings

Orders, catalogue etc., are available
Carey Conference

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African Pastors' Conferences

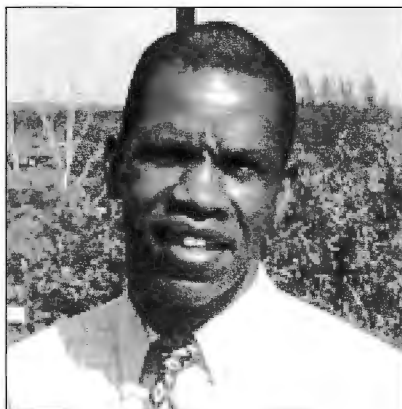


Choolwe Mwetwa

A report by Gary Morrison

Six African Pastors' Conferences were held in South Africa during January. My portfolio was to see that these conferences ran smoothly and that included organising the display of the books which are sold at subsidised prices thereby bringing very considerable advantage to the pastors. This latter responsibility was made a pleasure by diligent workers at each conference who know the book trade. Cornerstone Baptist Church, Bolton, generously and wholeheartedly supported me in these travels in sunny South Africa. My first pastorate was in Mandini, Kwazulu and with that background I have great sympathy for the needs of African pastors who live in an economic climate very different from ours.

The first conference was held at Mseleni near the border between Mozambique and South Africa. Pastor Choolwe Mwetwa (Central Baptist Church, Chingola, Zambia) spoke very challengingly on 'The marks of faithful ministry', and



Raymond Zulu

Pastor Raymond Zulu (High Wycombe Evangelical Church, UK) with the advantage of preaching in his mother tongue soared wonderfully on the theme 'The Word of God as our sure foundation'.

Our second conference at Koinonia Conference Centre was near the town of Hillcrest which is not far from the city of Durban. The preachers included Choolwe, Raymond, Dennis Hustedt (Utah, USA) and myself. The response was encouragingly very positive. Such is the increasing interest and edification that the pastors are calling for an extension to this work to reach the youth and from them to build up a future body of able ministers of the gospel. We will have our work cut out to wrestle with this challenge and act positively.

Our third stop was in the Eastern Cape at the city of Port Elizabeth, where Dr Paul Stoltz (Bible Institute of the Eastern Cape) very capably organised the three-day conference. Pastor Bob Dickie (Berean Baptist Church in Flint,



Irving Steggles



Gary Morrison

Michigan USA) also expounded the awe-inspiring subject of worship. We also had an outstanding Question and Answer session. Some interesting topics were discussed including the role of women in ministry. This cropped up at most of the conferences. It seems to be a recurring theme that may need to be addressed sensitively in the future.

The fourth conference was near the beautiful city of Pretoria. This time the speakers included Pastor Irving Steggles (Birchleigh Baptist Church, Kempton Park). He spoke on revival and delivered the conference sermon. The conference was a tremendous success under the very capable leadership and organisational skills of Irving who was assisted by church members from Birchleigh Baptist and also from Constantia Park Baptist Church in Pretoria where Martin Holdt is senior pastor. The book table ministry was also a great blessing here. The three days and two nights, including six meals, cost each person the equivalent astounding sum of 70 Rand (£5.00). This is an admirable demonstration of just how far money given by churches in both the USA and the UK can go towards financing more APCs in future years.

The fifth conference was in the large Free State town of Welkom. This once rich

gold-mining town is now not far from poverty. Even the local fire engines have been repossessed by the manufacturers. George van der Westhuizen the local minister of the CESA (Church of England in South Africa which is a reformed denomination) acted as host to the conference at his church building. There was tremendous response to the preachers Choolwe and Raymond. On a personal note heartbreak and challenge came to me the next day when the three of us visited Morning Star, a crèche for 85 local HIV positive children. What an inspiring work is done by the ladies there, especially Joan Adams who is responsible for running it.

Finally the last of the conferences took place at Newcastle. This was a first time event and was capably organised by Pastor Paul Jacobs. Here we saw demonstrated what can be done when a whole church supports a conference like this. This practical backing came from the Newcastle Baptist Church. Apart from subsidising the books little further subsidy is needed when this takes place. Some were disappointed because they did not have adequate time to secure enough money to purchase more of the discounted books that were available. In Newcastle they all wanted us to stay on for a second day. Lord willing, next year we will.

News

Belarus and books in Russian

Belarus is a former republic of the Soviet Union which became independent in 1992. It is situated on the western border of Russia. The population of the country is about ten million, with about two million living in the capital Minsk. Most of the Belorussian people speak Russian. That is one reason why *Evangelical Press* located its publication of Reformed books in Russian in Belarus in 1997.

EP has published 40 different titles with a total print run of 140,000 copies. The books are distributed at subsidised prices mainly in Russia, Belarus and Ukraine. Recent titles include *Spurgeon (Treasury of David, six volumes)*, John Blanchard (*Where is God when Things Go Wrong?*), Sharon James (*God's Design for Women*), and Iain Murray (*The Forgotten Spurgeon*).

Along with the publishing ministry EP organises conferences for Russian-speaking pastors. Since 2000 nine annual conferences have been held in Russia, Belarus and Ukraine. About one hundred attend each year. Preachers have included Stuart Olyott (three times), John Blanchard (twice), Iain Murray, Geoff Thomas and many others. The conferences have been a powerful instrument of introducing Russian-speaking pastors to Reformed theology.

In 2003 Slava Viazovski began to work with EP as the general manager of the Russian office helped by his wife Anya and by a small dedicated team of three other Christians. Slava has been an



Conference at Kiev

assistant pastor in a Reformed Baptist church in Minsk since 1997. He is a graduate of the Belorussian State University and also holds an MA in theology from Reformed Theological Seminary.

In the past years it has become apparent that EP can exercise a spiritual impact on the post-communist countries by supporting theological education in that part of the world. There is an urgent need of theological education in Belarus. There are new Reformed churches but no Reformed seminary. The nearest ones are in Samara (Russia) – 1000 miles to the east from Minsk, and in Kiev (Ukraine) – 450 miles away.

Slava begins doctoral study at Highland Theological College this year with a view to establishing the first Reformed seminary in Belarus. This is in partnership with EP. The current political and economic situation in Belarus discourages the launching of a seminary. But the time of religious

freedom will surely come and this ambition will be achieved.

Professor Andy McIntosh and Creation

Professor Andy McIntosh has been writing in defence of creation as against evolution in *Evangelical Times* and *Evangelicals Now*. He has drawn attention to the evolutionist position of Denis Alexander who claims to be an evangelical but in his book 'Creation or Evolution – do we have to choose?' takes the evolution position. In the *Evangelical Times* for October there is an article with the title, 'The downgrade controversy of the 21st century'. In this Prof McIntosh shows the extent to which Alexander's book is compromised in theology and in science. Prof McIntosh recommends David Anderson who has written a detailed review of Alexander's book which can be accessed at <http://david.dw-perspective.org.uk/writings/creation-or-evolution-dr-denis-alexander>.

This review by David Anderson goes through each chapter stage by stage, examining Alexander's arguments critically and showing that his thinking is the product of liberal theology. Prof McIntosh writes, 'Alexander's view sadly represents so much the prevalent view in the Christian Church that you can marry the Bible and evolution. As a professing Bible evangelical he has argued against taking the early chapters of Genesis as a true historical record. He argues that Adam was a neolithic descendant of some ape-like ancestor and that God called such a creature Adam to be in some sense 'in His image' and, that only spiritual death followed the Fall, that the Flood was local and not global ... all the usual arguments made

by theistic evolutionists. He even suggests at one point that Aborigines in Australia may not have come from the same stock as Adam - frankly astonishing and in denial of Acts 17:26 which states that "He has made from one blood every nation of men". What is serious is that this is propounded not by someone who does not claim to believe in the Bible, but rather by someone who does and is widely respected as the director of the Faraday Institute which investigates matters of science and faith. The issues are vital since the whole argument of Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15 concerning the theology of the Fall and Redemption of Man through Christ is predicated on the Fall being a real event involving a perfect Adam and Eve who had not experienced physical death or suffering beforehand. Alexander likes to call Genesis 1-3 a theological poem which is a euphemism for denying the historicity of those chapters – chapters which are fundamental to the understanding of the root cause of sin and rebellion in man and the vital need for Christ's death on the Cross. Both spiritual separation and physical death are involved in the Fall and in redemption through Christ's glorious victory on the Cross and resurrection three days later. Without these connected truths the fabric of redemption falls apart. Our certain hope of physical resurrection is predicated on the fact that Adam's rebellion brought physical death and Christ not only suffered the enormity of spiritual separation from his Father for our sins but bowed his head, dismissed his spirit (the literal rendering of John 19:30) and physically died. Death (both physical and spiritual) has to be after the Fall of Adam and Eve and not before, else 1 Cor 15:22 "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" makes no sense.'

'The biggest battle in my view is not really with the secularists - Dawkins, Jones, David Attenborough and the BBC who are all of course full of trumpeting Darwin at the forthcoming 200th year of his birth... No, the real danger is from people who are in our own ranks who have been deceived and are deceiving others.'

Mozambique

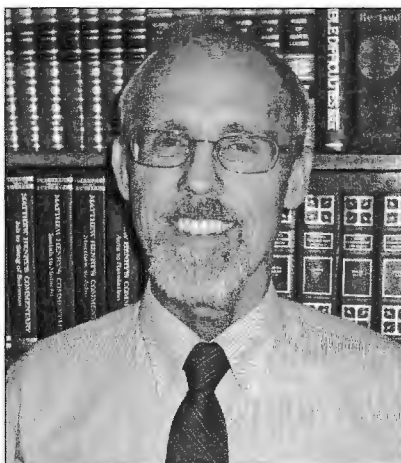
At the Sola5 Conference held during September 2008, 'Comunhão dos Crentes em Cristo' (CCC Fellowship of Believers in Christ) was accepted as the first Mozambican Sola5 church.

Dr Charles Woodrow, missionary in Nampula, Mozambique, organises the annual FIEL Conference together with Karl Peterson (see report and photos in RT 226).

Charles Woodrow explains the character of the church in Nampula as follows:

'Comunhão dos Crentes em Cristo' is different from other churches in the Sola5 Association in that it is a Portuguese-speaking church in Mozambique. We would be delighted if other churches here would follow our example in joining Sola5 so that a whole group of Mozambican congregations could be allied to each other through the five Solas of the Reformation. Perhaps in time there will be formed a Portuguese-speaking sister association called *Sola Cinco*.

Toward that end, in conjunction with Karl Peterson from Barberton, South Africa and Editora FIEL (Faithful Publishers) from Brazil, CCC has helped host the annual nation-wide FIEL Conference for church leaders over the past nine years. These conferences are



Dr Charles Woodrow

held here in Nampula, the second largest city in the country with a population of over 400,000 and the cultural and economic hub of northern Mozambique. Recent conferences have been attended by over 200 church leaders and their wives coming from every province in the nation. Our speakers come from Brazil, England, the United States, South Africa, and Zambia. The purpose of these conferences is to acquaint Mozambican leaders from all denominations with the rich legacies left us by the Reformation Fathers.

Together with Grace Missions, the church also helps sponsor and staff a Reformed Evangelical Christian bookstore in downtown Nampula, the only Christian bookstore we know of in northern Mozambique. Salomé van Niekerk, an associate member of CCC, is from Constantia Park Baptist Church in Pretoria. She oversees Editora Fiel's nation-wide literature distribution program whereby selected pastors receive one free book a month for 36 months. To date 189 church leaders are either on this program or have completed

it already. We are grateful to God that these efforts to bring biblical faith to Mozambican churches have enjoyed his manifest blessing over the years.

The church itself was officially founded in 2001 and started with four strong Mozambican believers, two of whom had been walking faithfully with Christ for nearly ten years already. Those two men, Arnaldo Aquiles Junior and Costódio Gustavo, are today the national leaders and teachers of the congregation. In eight years the church has grown to a typical Sunday morning attendance of 30 adults and ten to twenty children. Of the adults, twenty are members (thirteen Mozambicans and seven expatriates) and the rest are Mozambican visitors who attend regularly but hesitate to surrender themselves to Christ. Though growth has been slow, we are thankful that six of our twenty members have joined just in the past year, four of them through a profession of faith.

Because of the many ties to local culture that must be severed in the process of becoming a Christian, it is no small decision when a Mozambican asks to join CCC. The leaders of our congregation are diligent in exhorting the brethren to biblical, godly living and in setting a good example in their own lives. People know that commitment to Christ and his Word is taken seriously; that among other things members are expected to speak the truth, to keep themselves pure before marriage, to marry believers only, to remain faithful to their spouses until death, never to resort to witch doctors, and to shun completely ancestor worship despite the pressures that may be brought to bear by family members. We are a grace church. These rules are in no place written down and codified, nor do we preach rules to the people, but they do illustrate just a few of the ways love for Christ and

obedience to him is diametrically opposed to local custom in our setting. As these expectations are unthinkable in the eyes of many Mozambicans they do not themselves glibly join our assembly.

Two of the men who joined in 2008, Bonifácio Manuel and Orlando Mário, had attended worship regularly for over five years, had each read the Bible from cover to cover, and had even memorised over 300 Bible passages in the church's Bible catechism program. So, when they did finally ask to meet with the leaders about membership, we were not surprised to hear gratifying, convincing testimonies of how God had recently opened their eyes to finally comprehend the truth and had wed their hearts to Christ so that they were ready to follow him despite adverse consequences. We rejoice when Mozambicans are so swept away with Christ that they can't wait to join his body, and we have seen those conversions too, but we are even more sure when men come forward who have carefully and soberly considered the cost of discipleship and have already proven Christ's power at work in their hearts.

Commitment to God's Word is also reflected in that 18 of our 20 members have read the entire Bible and are known to read it on a daily basis, and 12 have already memorised the entire Scripture catechism of over 300 short Bible passages. These comments serve only to point out some of the ways this congregation is unlike many traditional churches here. Yet at the same time we much need and desire a greater work of grace and love in the hearts of all our members and leaders, that we might have the winsomeness of Christ that woos the lost and helps them over the cultural obstacles that hinder true conversion, something that has been a weakness in the past.

The Gospel in China – 1900-1914

Part Five by Bob Davey

A lesson we learn from the history of the gospel in China during the nineteenth century is that zealous, dedicated, consistent and prayerful witness for Christ had been blessed by God whatever the political and social chaos prevailing in the nation. Indeed by 1900 the gospel was well established in China with about 100,000 communicant members of evangelical churches. The next fifty years saw a period of growth to about 900,000 evangelicals and the rise of a number of gifted Chinese Christian leaders who took a leading role in the life of the Chinese churches. This occurred in a period of China's history just as turbulent as that of the nineteenth century.

Effects of the Boxer uprising on the gospel missions

Though the 1900 uprising was put down speedily, the effects of the murderous hatred let loose on Christians had been traumatic for the Missions. So on 7 September 1900 four hundred Protestant missionaries from twenty societies met in conference at Shanghai to take stock of their situation. It was recognised that the restraining hand of God had been clearly evidenced time and time again in the midst of the troubles and the swift end to the uprising had prevented the troubles spreading to many more provinces. Many missionaries had chosen to stay and suffer with their Chinese brethren. The bonds of love and mutual appreciation between the foreign missionaries and Chinese Christians had deepened by their sharing the same sufferings. There was also a determination on the part of surviving missionaries who had been forced to flee to the coast to return to their stations as soon as possible, accompanied by additional recruits.

The aftermath of the Boxer persecution in Shanxi province, where persecution had been the bloodiest, was a rallying of the churches. Some fine Chinese Christian leaders had emerged in the midst of the furnace of affliction and many churches had learned to stand on their own feet and what followed was a fruitfulness in spiritual life and witness which led to a marked growth in membership. This fruitfulness was not confined to Shanxi.

The issue concerning reparations

The question of claims for compensation for losses of life or property of both Missions and Chinese Christians soon came under debate and each society adopted its own individual policy. It was clear to the Missions that nevertheless

there ought to be a clear-cut distinction between the actions of the secular powers and those of the missionaries. A money-conscious nation like the Chinese would recognise the difference. The China Inland Mission and its associates, which had borne the brunt of the persecutions, set an admirable example. The CIM formally decided 'not only to not enter any claim against the Chinese government, but to refrain from accepting compensation even if offered'. This stand of principle was made to keep Church and State, religion and politics separate, even though the cost of sustaining the refugees and re-establishing works from scratch was heavy and fell on the Mission. However nearly all the denominational missionary societies decided to accept reparations for damaged property. For instance the American societies made a united presentation of their claims through the U.S. Department of State.

An acid test concerning compensation came on the first anniversary date of the massacre at Taiyuan in the province of Shanxi. Taiyuan was the scene of the bloodiest massacre of missionaries and Chinese Christians during the uprising. The massacre had been master-minded by the then governor, the ruthless anti-foreign Yu Xian, 'The Butcher of Shansi'. 35 Protestant British, 12 Roman Catholics and about 30 Chinese Christians had been beheaded on 9 July 1900 alone. The new governor Cheng Chunxuan (Ceng) invited Missions for an official welcome back and for direct face-to-face negotiations concerning reparations. The delegation was led by D E Hoste and A Orr-Ewing of the CIM and they had an official escort for the last thirty miles into Taiyuan. They were greeted on 9 July 1901 by an immense crowd waiting at the great south gate, among them many delighted Christians, 'their faces showing clear traces of their sufferings'. Rain fell shortly after their arrival and this was regarded as a propitious sign. After an official dinner, a memorial service at the site of execution and other elaborate Chinese ceremonies, formal discussions concerning reparations took place.

It was expected that claims from the Missions would be exorbitant which the Chinese authorities would subsequently reduce by up to 30%. The CIM refused all compensation for itself but the basis of compensation for individual Chinese Christians was settled after careful consultation with Chinese Christian leaders, of which Xu Puyuan stood out and was recognised as the leading elder by all. A letter addressed to all churches linked with the CIM set out the policy. 'Christians who have had relatives murdered and are willing that they should have laid down their lives for the Lord's sake, and do not wish to report the case to the official, will be following the best course.... Those who have been wounded and are maimed or disabled, but who have property and are able to support themselves, and are willing to forgive their enemies and therefore do not wish to report the matter to the official, will do well. (Others should follow the normal process of law for the action of the temporal Government in vindication of law and order is also recognised as being of God)... There must be no carelessness or overstating, lest by your falseness the Lord's name be dishonoured.' All claims were to be truthful and

itemised carefully, then investigated locally by trustworthy men and confirmed by the elders before submission to the authorities.

The climax of this process was when Dixon Hoste submitted a statement of the CIM losses to Governor Ceng and his associates. He added that no compensation would be claimed or accepted by the CIM or associate Missions. The Governor was incredulous. Hoste was then given liberty to explain the Christian thinking behind the policy. The Governor responded generously with a proclamation of honour concerning Christian conduct, which carried his fullest approval. This remarkable proclamation was to be placarded wherever the CIM had worked and suffered throughout Shanxi province.

The issue concerning those who had recanted their faith

The other problem of common concern to the churches was the treatment of the members who had recanted their faith under duress and now wanted re-admission. 'The ground we have taken is that anyone recanting places himself by his own act outside the Church, and it remains for those concerned (the local church) to consider the question of his re-admission. We find that there have been great varieties in the degree and manner of recantation. In many cases certificates were received from the Mandarin as a temporary expedient for averting extreme penalties while the storm lasted. Many local officials shrank from carrying into effect the sanguinary orders of the Governor (Yu Xian) and hit upon this device to tide over the difficulty. Other cases (present) varying degrees of conformity to idolatry. You can understand how extremely difficult our position is ... by any want of sympathy and love, nothing could be easier than to quench the smoking flax and simply drive the poor, disheartened, suffering Christians to despair ... Not to deal clearly and decidedly with the matter would mean the end of all discipline and Church order in the future.' The poignancy of the situation was evidenced everywhere as in place after place the grim details of torture, maiming, terror and coercion, shame and bitter grief were revealed. Dixon Hoste called it 'the most painful experience of my life'. About 250 repentant former members were reinstated.

It was Dixon Hoste's conviction after his visit to Shanxi that 'the former basis of full independence assisted by missionaries led to a stronger Church than joint leadership and responsibility by Chinese and missionaries together'. Behind this statement was the missionary strategy of seeking to establish self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating churches, but the full implementation of this in China was in practice illusive. Full independence only became reality after the Communist takeover of China when the Chinese Church was thrown entirely upon God for survival.

Shanghai Centenary Missionary Conference 1907

How little progress had been made in giving leadership to the Chinese Christians can be seen by the fact that after a hundred years' missionary activity in China there were only 7 Chinese delegates out of 1170 delegates present at this Centenary Conference! Nevertheless, Missions had made great gains numerically in the past twenty years of political confusion. By 1905 they had 3,445 Protestant missionaries and 178,000 communicant members. By 1910 the number of communicant members had passed 200,000, double the number at the turn of the century.

The conference commemorated the arrival of Robert Morrison, the first Protestant missionary for China, at Canton in September 1807. On his way to China, all alone with no companion, Robert Morrison had been asked, 'Mr Morrison, do you really expect that you will make an impression on the idolatry of the great Chinese Empire?' 'No, sir,' was his reply, 'I expect God will.'

The Shanghai Conference brought to light some ominous signs for the future. A liberal theology and a social gospel were making rapid advances among the missionary community. Missionary work was becoming professionalised. The conference reflected a growing concern with organisation and education. A strong ecumenical voice was heard, the medical health of China assumed as much importance as the gospel, and Western education curricula were marginalising the gospel. The means of assisting the gospel were replacing the gospel itself. The ascendancy of evangelicalism was being challenged, but the largest missionary society in China by far, the China Inland Mission, remained true to the biblical gospel and stood firm against all pressures. It continued to pursue its proven policies.

Revival 1908-1911

A remarkable spiritual revival had broken out at Pyongyang in Korea during the New Year Bible Study of 1907, a meeting of fifteen hundred men. After the Shanghai Conference a Canadian Presbyterian John Goforth went to see for himself and then travelled through to Manchuria 'spreading the flame of revival' there during 1908. This work was remarkable for the depth of conviction of sin on believer and unbeliever alike. In 1908-09 a similar revival visited Shanxi under the preaching of Albert Lutley and a Chinese evangelist Wang Qitai. Albert Lutley was no stranger to Shanxi as he and his family had to flee from there during the Boxer rebellion. His two daughters had died during the escape. This work first in Shanxi, then in the provinces of Shaanxi and Sichuan, was remarkable for the depth of conviction of sin on believer and unbeliever alike. Whole congregations fell on their faces to the ground in prayer and confession, very quietly without demonstration or excitement. The presence of God was real and profound.

This wave of revival continued from province to province in China until 1911. Some of the later meetings were accompanied by extreme emotional and physical manifestations similar to those in the early Methodist revival in England in the eighteenth century and to those in the frontier districts of the United States in the early nineteenth century. Then during 1911 public meetings became impracticable as China became convulsed by armed rebellion and lawlessness.

Edwin Orr records, 'The Christian and Missionary Alliance noted that 1908 was a year of glorious revival in South China. Into the year 1911 the revival seethed. The revival in China in these years proved to be the *beginning of an indigenous spirit in the Chinese churches*. In spite of opposition, a way was being prepared for the coming of greater awakening among the Chinese Christians *who were coming of age at last*' (italics mine).

A notable work was among the minority Miao people of south-west China. Samuel Pollard, a Cornishman and Bible Christian Methodist, had worked among them since 1887. Between 1904 and 1910 he witnessed what was almost a mass movement into the Church. He reduced to writing the language, devising a script for it, and translated the New Testament. He died of typhoid fever in 1915.

Another notable work was among the minority Lisu people of south-west China. James Fraser (CIM) was a graduate engineer and gifted musician. He worked among the Lisu from 1910. By 1916 he began to see the Lisu turn from animism to Christ. By 1918 sixty thousand tested believers had been baptised and formed a strong indigenous Church. Fraser became a superintendent on the China Council of the CIM. He died of malaria in 1938.

YMCA and YWCA

The Young Men's Christian Association in China had first been organised in Mission colleges in 1885. By 1900 there were forty-seven Associations in eight provinces. In 1901 a national convention brought together one hundred and seventy delegates, over three-quarters of them Chinese. After this the growth of the organisation was phenomenal and it developed a number of new and important types of work for young men on a thoroughly evangelical base. In addition to Bible classes and evangelistic services, programmes of educational lectures, debates, hostels, conferences, sports and social works were developed. Many of the revolutionary leaders came through the YMCA because the Chinese young men were hungry for Western knowledge. The YMCA set a new standard of turning Christian organisations over to the control and support of the local Chinese. Strong links were made with students going abroad to study in order to aid them in the difficult process of adjustment to their new environment.

In 1907 John R Mott conducted the first organised meetings to reach government schools in the big cities with the gospel. So successful were these that by 1913 he

was leading meetings with George S Eddy which had attendances averaging over two thousand per night. Admission was by ticket only and limited to teachers, students, officials, and members of the local gentry. Many thousands enrolled to study Christianity.

Ting Li-mei became the first travelling secretary of the YMCA in China. Ting Li-mei, a pastor in the province of Shantung (Shandong), had suffered for his faith in the Boxer uprising and through that and later developments had come into a deep religious experience. In the spring of 1909 a revival broke out in Shantung Union College under his leadership. Over a hundred boys decided to enrol for the Christian ministry. In 1910 a Chinese Student Volunteer Movement for the (Christian) Ministry was formed with the motto 'The evangelisation of our mother country and the world in this generation'. This breath-taking optimism, so much the product of 'Western nineteenth-century optimism' at its height, was to be dashed to the ground by the searing experiences of the First World War of 1914-1918.

The sister organisation, the Young Women's Christian Association, followed the same programme as the YMCA, although on a smaller scale. In Shanghai the YWCA started programmes for the women and girls employed in the factories that were beginning to make that port an industrial centre. By 1913 there were three city Associations and thirty-three student Associations.

The end of the Qing dynasty (1900-1912)

Failure to reform and the fiasco of the Boxer uprising convinced many that the only remedy for China's ills lay in outright revolution. The chief advocate of a republican revolution was Sun Yat-sen, and his influence rapidly increased at home and abroad. A revolutionary military uprising broke out on 10 October 1911 at Wuchan (Wuhan), capital of Hubei province. By late November fifteen of the twenty-four provinces had declared their independence from the Qing empire. The Republic of China was proclaimed in Nanjing on 1 January 1912 with Sun Yat-sen as provisional President. The Qing dynasty collapsed. When the Empress Dowager Long Yu abdicated in the name of the child Emperor Pu Yi on 12 February 1912, Imperial China had come to an end.

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John Owen on Mortification

A review by Brian Beevers

Overcoming Sin and Temptation John Owen

Edited by Kelly M Kapic and Justin Taylor, Crossway Books, 452 pages paperback, 2006.

This is a new edition of three works by John Owen: *On the Mortification of Sin in believers*, *On Temptation* and *On Indwelling Sin in Believers*. These were published between 1656 and 1668. They were reprinted by the Banner of Truth in volume 6 of the Works of John Owen in 1966.

'The mortification of indwelling sin remaining in our mortal bodies, that it may not have life and power to bring forth the deeds of the flesh, is the constant duty of believers.'

Introduction

The first observation to make is that this is not a modern English version, an abridgement or a simplified version of the original works of Owen. The Banner of Truth and Christian Focus have produced paperback editions of The Mortification of Sin. Rather, it is a new edition of Owen with various features to help the modern reader to digest and understand Owen. These features include: clearer chapter divisions, highlighting of important points, overviews of each work, footnotes explaining obsolete words, a glossary of obsolete words, and outlines of each work. The English is partly modernised with regard to 'thee and thine', 'hath and wast' etc. Having read the original works, I can say that these features have helped me to read and comprehend Owen better.

It therefore follows that, in reviewing this book, I am really reviewing the original three books by John Owen, as there is no substantial difference in the text. This is quite an undertaking but it is probably worthwhile as, I imagine, Owen will be increasingly unfamiliar to the modern reader. In his book *Catch the Vision*, published by Evangelical Press in 2007, John J Murray recounts the following information about Dr Packer, 'one of God's giants'. Following his conversion at Oxford in 1944, James Packer soon became acquainted with the works of John Owen and, as junior librarian, sorted through the volumes of his works, which were in the OICCU library, unread, with the pages still uncut. To quote from Murray's book: 'As he came to volume 6 (Goold edition, 1850-53) he was particularly struck by the titles of the two treatises, *On Indwelling Sin in Believers* and *On the Mortification of Sin in Believers*.'

I too was converted at Oxford, some 14 years after Dr Packer. During the summer vacation after my conversion I borrowed the same volume of Owen from the library; I doubt whether it had been read very much in the meantime. I found it very challenging and helpful. Indeed, I don't think that I had a clear concept or conviction of sin before I read this book.

General Comments

As I have said already, this book comprises three works of Owen, *On the Mortification of Sin in Believers*, published in 1656, *On Temptation* (1658) and *On Indwelling Sin in Believers* (1675). They are grouped together in

volume 6 of Goold's edition, together with an exposition of Psalm 130, which takes up about half of the volume.

These treatises are classified by Goold as Practical, which is the smallest section of Owen's works. Most of his writings were concerned with doctrinal or controversial topics. He wrote these practical works in response to what he felt were urgent problems among believers in his day. He considered, for example, that there was little true comprehension of mortification of sin. Many regarded mortification as a matter of outward discipline, trying to subdue the body. He was concerned about the low level of Christian living and the number of people who were abandoning the faith.

On the Mortification of Sin in Believers

This is a fairly short work, comprising about 90 pages in this edition. It is based on an exposition of Romans 8:13. The work is comprised of three parts: Part 1: The Necessity of Mortification, Part 2: The Nature of Mortification, Part 3: the Means of Mortification.

In chapter 1 he makes the statement that *'the mortification of indwelling sin remaining in our mortal bodies, that it may not have life and power to bring forth the works or deeds of the flesh is the constant duty of believers.'* This is emphasised in the Crossway edition by the use of centralised text.

In chapter 2 he goes on to show the absolute necessity of continued fighting against sin. The editors highlight the following exhortation:

Do you mortify? Do you make it your daily work? Be always at it while you live; cease not a day from this work; be killing

sin or it will be killing you (page 50). *(as printed in the Crossway edition.)*

In Part 2 on The Nature of Mortification Owen gives the following general rules about mortification:

1. Mortification is not the utter destruction and death of sin.
2. Mortification is not the dissimulation of sin (pretending that it is mortified).
3. Mortification is not the improvement of a quiet, sedate nature.
4. Mortification is not the diversion of sin.
5. Mortification is not just occasional conquests over sin.
6. Mortification consists in a habitual weakening of sin.

In the remainder of this section he gives nine particular directions for mortification, each of which he explains.

On Temptation

This comprises about 70 pages in this edition. It is divided into four parts. Part 1: The Nature of Temptation, Part 2: The Danger of Entering Temptation, Part 3: The Great Duty of All Believers, Part 4: Particular Cases and General Directions. It starts with the foundational text Matthew 26:41. In the introduction Owen shows the way in which God tempts and the way in which Satan tempts. He also shows that 'entering into temptation' is not just being tempted but means falling into temptation and being entangled in it (1 Tim 6:9).

At the start of Part 2 he makes the following statement, printed as follows in this edition:

It is the great duty of all believers to use all diligence in the ways of Christ's appointment, that they fall not into temptation (page 167).

Towards the end, in Part 4, he gives as his sixth direction:

'Labour to know your own frame and temper; what spirit you are of; what associates in your heart Satan has; where grace is weak; what stronghold lust has in your natural constitution, and the like' (page 202).

On Indwelling Sin in Believers

This was originally published 9 years after the work on temptation. It is about as long as the other two works put together, comprising about 170 pages in this edition. In the preface Owen observes that there have been many works about the effects and power of sin in people in general but not concerning the power and effect of indwelling sin in believers in particular. He takes as his foundation text Romans 7: 21. Like all the Puritans, John Owen takes it for granted that Romans 7: 7-25 describes the state of a regenerate person.

The work is divided into three parts: Part 1: The Nature of Indwelling Sin, Part 2: The Power and Efficacy of Indwelling Sin, Part 3: The Effect and Strength of Indwelling Sin. The second part is much longer than the other two, comprising about 120 pages.

Towards the start of this section Owen describes indwelling sin as consisting of 'aversation to God' and opposition to God. In the footnote 'aversation' is explained as 'a state of being contrary to or in opposition to'. He gives various exhortations to help us deal with this

aversation, such as: 'Labour to prevent the very beginnings of the workings of this aversation; let grace be beforehand with it in every duty.' He also says: 'Labour to possess the mind with the beauty and excellency of spiritual things, so that they may be presented lovely and desirable to the soul; and this cursed aversation of sin will be weakened thereby.'

Conclusion

I hope that in this review I have been able to convey some idea of the original works of John Owen, and the particular merits of this new edition. As Justin Taylor observes in the preface, Owen has a ponderous literary style and is not easy to read, apart from the archaic English of the 17th century. This edition makes it easier to digest Owen, not by modernising or simplifying the style, but rather by improving the layout of the text and adding explanatory notes. I would certainly recommend it as a starting point to reading Owen. I would also recommend these works as a good introduction to Owen, and of great spiritual benefit, provided that we put what Owen says into practice! These works are classics on their subject and I don't think that there is anything to compare with them, certainly nothing so profound or penetrating. A footnote on page 17 lists various abridgements of Owen and attempts to present his arguments for today. The only problem I can see with this edition is that it is American and not so easy to obtain in this country. It can be ordered from a bookshop, or from Amazon. The ISBN number is 13: 978-1-58134-649-7, Crossway Books, \$19.99.

Brian S Beevers

Book Reviews

Marriage

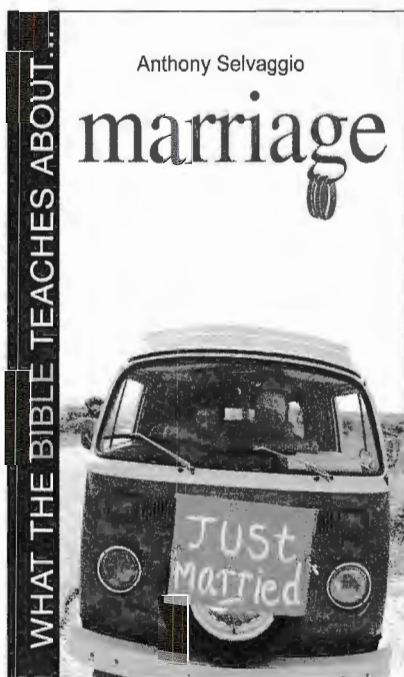
Anthony Selvaggio
Evangelical Press, 233 pages,
ISBN: 0-85234-634-1 £6.95

This book will be of substantial value for people of all ages who have an interest in biblical teaching concerning romantic love between a man and a woman. Pastors who counsel couples before marriage, or for difficulties within marriage, will find in it a fresh, practical and thoroughly biblical source of material. The book would be of exceptional benefit to young married or engaged couples, helping them to build their relationship on solid foundations. Just as importantly, any serious young Christian who is interested in friendship with someone of the opposite sex will find here quite unusual practical guidance based squarely on the irrefutable teaching of Scripture, though much of it is out of step with common practice in our ungodly culture.

The author opens up the meaning of numerous metaphors used in the 'Song of Solomon' with unusual insight and sound biblical exegesis of this and other relevant Scriptures. For the unmarried person he emphasises maturity and purity as the prerequisites of true love. He then describes the nature of true love as exclusive, enduring and priceless. His closing chapters deal with the fostering of friendship and romance within marriage as well as seeing the physical relationship between a man and a woman as an extremely precious gift of God to be enjoyed within the precious and unique relationship of marriage.

Throughout the book the author emphasises that it is only by knowing the

priceless love of Christ that we are enabled to know the fullness of pure, enduring romantic love and to rejoice in anticipation of the ultimate bliss of 'our true home where we will dwell with our eternal spouse and experience perfect love'.



Every chapter concludes with a number of questions for discussion and review and there are many references cited throughout the book. This review cannot possibly do justice to the extensive practical teaching found here, all of it illuminating and deeply challenging. It is a remarkable book.

Colin Vincent, Great Ellingham
(This review first appeared in Grace magazine, July 2007).

Preparing for marriage

(Study and Leader's Guides)

Pete Jackson

The Good Book Company

Pages: Study 24. Leader's 64.

ISBN 1-90556 - 42 - 31 and 1-90556 - 43 - 61

Price: £3 and £6.

This marriage course is designed to be used by a minister with just one engaged couple or with several couples together over a period of four weeks. In each session the couple(s) are encouraged to talk about their relationship, and read together verses from the Bible which are explained in a short talk followed by discussion. You can hear the author delivering these talks online at www.thegoodbook.co.uk. Each session lasts about thirty to forty-five minutes. Couples are asked to fill in questions ready for the next session. Topics covered are as follows: A marriage made in heaven?, The problem with marriage, The sacrifice of marriage and The promises made in the wedding service. The author states that *Preparing for Marriage* 'is unashamedly evangelistic. It is built on the premise that if people are not relating to God in a right way they will not relate to each other in a right way' because many couples 'will almost certainly know very little or nothing about the good news of Jesus Christ'. These excellent booklets could be usefully used by Grace Baptist pastors/elders with engaged couples.

Stan K Evers, Potton

(This review first appeared in *Grace* magazine, July 2007).

A Handful of Pebbles:

Theological Liberalism and the Church,

Peter Barnes,

Banner of Truth Trust, 2008, 88 pages,

ISBN 978 0 85151 977 7,

£5.50

Have you ever tried to persuade an earnest fellow-Christian that not all

ministers preach the gospel, or that not all theological colleges can be trusted? In Romans 16 verse 18 the apostle Paul warns against those who 'deceive the minds of naïve people'. Too many Christians are naïve about claims to truth. Some, of course, are so suspicious that no-one passes their scrutiny, but there is a happy mean. This small but important book gives an insight into the current state of religious teaching and the reasons for it.

Peter Barnes, an Australian minister, traces the history of what is known, rather inaccurately, as 'liberalism' - inaccurately, because, like many modern teachings, it is very intolerant of evangelicals who refuse to be swept away by it. He defines it as 'a belief system which rejects the orthodox view of the Christian faith as set out in the Bible'. His survey includes names such as Schleiermacher, Wellhausen, Don Cupitt and William Barclay. He explains why neo-orthodoxy (Karl Barth) is not orthodox at all.

After showing how liberalism affects all the major doctrines, including the resurrection and eternal punishment, he warns against the 'rather repellent ferocity of spirit' found in some, and urges us to seek both truth and love. He contrasts the uselessness of liberalism's barren 'handful of pebbles' with the true Bread of life, the Lord Jesus Christ, as found in the Bible. This is not an issue of nit-picking accuracy, but of 'life and death, of the destiny of immortal souls'. How wary and discerning we all need to be.

John Legg

(This review first appeared in *The Evangelical Magazine*, 2009)

The Puritans on Adoption

Heirs with Christ

The Puritans on Adoption

Joel R Beeke

Reformation Heritage Books, USA.

134 pages, small size hardback

If you use google, type in The 1689 and there you can extract the Puritan chapter on adoption which reads:

‘All those that are justified, God vouchsafed, in and for the sake of his only Son Jesus Christ, to make partakers of the grace of adoption, by which they are taken into the number, and enjoy the liberties and privileges of the children of God, have his name put upon them, receive the spirit of adoption, have access to the throne of grace with boldness, are enabled to cry Abba, Father, are pitied, protected, provided for, and chastened by him as by a Father, yet never cast off, but sealed to the day of redemption, and inherit the promises as heirs of everlasting salvation.’

Did the better-known Puritan writers develop the doctrine of adoption to the full? In the article ‘Recovering the Doctrine of Adoption’ (RT 105) I thought not. Jim Packer in his book ‘Knowing God’ (p. 207) is of that mind as is Sinclair Ferguson who suggests that the Puritans did not adequately address the centrality of sonship in biblical doctrine or as an organising principle for understanding salvation (p. 107).

In this gem of a book Joel Beeke robustly contends that more attention was paid to adoption than the Puritans have been given credit for. He has unearthed no less than seven books on adoption by Puritan writers that have been lost to posterity. Judging by his frequent quotations from

Samuel Willard it would be a service to republish his work and hopefully that of Simon Ford as well.

Joel Beeke reminds us that spiritual adoption is ‘the excellency and apex of God’s salvation’ (1 John 3:1). He cites contemporary Robert Peterson who sees adoption as ‘an overflowing way of viewing the Christian faith’, arguing that adoption influences most major theological loci.

In twelve pithy, enriching, practical short chapters various vistas of adoption are explored. Excellent insights abound. On Romans 8:15 Ezekiel Hopkins assures readers that the slavish fear wrought in a convicted soul is indeed a work of the Holy Spirit (p. 49).

In the chapter ‘The Privileges and Benefits of Adoption’ the Dutch Puritan Brakel is quoted: ‘The Lord looks upon such children in love, and is pleased with their childlike complaints and their taking refuge to him. He will certainly answer them and deliver them at his time and in his manner’ (p. 84). But Simon Ford in a whole series of practical exhortations warns against ‘a secret murmuring frame of spirit against God’s present dispensations towards thee; as if God dealt very hardly and contrary to his wonted course with thee’ (p. 99). Samuel Willard opens up the ministry of angels who watch over God’s children and who come in convoy to carry them home to heaven when they die (Luke 16:22) (p. 91).

The book concludes with a marvellous quote from Willard too long for here. Be sure to buy a copy of this fine book.
Editor

The Fourth Servant Song

The four Servant Songs which describe the Messiah either biographically (first and fourth) or autobiographically (second and third) are like a mountain range in which every mountain peak is higher than the previous one. The fourth recorded in Isaiah 52:13 to 53:12 is the 'Messianic Everest' not only of Isaiah but of the Old Testament.

My purpose will be to comment on the first two of the five stanzas and in a further article open up the last three stanzas.

The text of the first stanza runs as follows:

See, my servant will act wisely; he will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted. Just as there were many who were appalled at him – his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness – so will he sprinkle many nations, and kings will shut their mouths because of him. For what they were not told, they will see, and what they have not heard, they will understand (Isa 52:13-15).

This is an introduction and a rough outline of the four stanzas which follow. The first Servant Song begins with the same call, Behold! or See! (AV, NKJV and ESV). This word is a call to concentrate fully on Yahweh's Servant.

'See, my servant will act wisely.' This acting wisely includes the sense of success. He will act successfully. Calvin takes the text to mean, 'My Servant shall have prosperous success.' The first Servant Song declared that he would successfully complete his mission: 'he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth' (Isa 42:4).

His mission will tax him to the uttermost. The sufferings he will undergo will be worse and more profound than those of any other human being because he absorbs the wrath of God against sin. 'It was suffering that borders on the unthinkable' (Leupold). His dreadful ordeal affected his appearance, 'disfigured beyond that of any man'. The third Servant Song

describes some of this, 'I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard; I did not hide my face from mocking and spitting' (Isa 50:6).

The contrast from the lowest depths of humiliation to the highest position of authority and power is expressed by the text, 'He will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted.' This points to his resurrection, ascension and exaltation. 'Never was man brought so low; never was anyone raised so high' (Leupold).

Note the unique nature of the Servant firstly in the place from which he came, secondly in his humiliation, and thirdly in his exaltation. His Messianic titles tell of his unique origin. 'Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace' (Isa 9:6). He is unique in his willingness to be made sin for us (2 Cor 5:21). That took him to the lowest place to be made a curse for us as it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree' (Gal 3:13). He is unique in being raised from the lowest place, the cross and grave, to the highest place of dignity and authority. This is well expressed by Albert Barnes in his commentary on this passage, 'The idea is, that as he was the most despised among men, so he would yet be the most honoured; as he had voluntarily assumed the lowest place for the redemption of men, so he would be exalted to the highest place to which human nature can be elevated.'

The famous Philippians passage is parallel to this first stanza. 'Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father' (Phil 2:5-11).

'So will he sprinkle many nations.' The Book of Numbers chapter 19 describes the whole burnt offering of a red heifer. The ashes of the heifer were mixed with water which was used for sprinkling in purification rites.

The fourth Servant Song anticipated

For exposition of the first Servant Song see *Yahweh's Servant and the Bruised Reed* (RT 225), *Discouragement and its Antidote* (RT 226), and *The Third Servant Song* (RT 227).

The first Servant Song (Isaiah 42:1-4) calls us to look at the Messiah sent by Yahweh. The first stanza describes his person, the second his ministry and the third the character of his kingdom. Yahweh's Servant will be a pastor *par excellence*: 'A bruised reed he will not break and a smouldering wick he will not snuff out.' The Servant pastor's skills apply to people suffering every kind of malady and struggling with every kind of predicament and sorrow. Military leaders leave their dead on battlefields. This leader raises souls from spiritual and physical death and gives them eternal life. His paramount concern is for justice. Though the task is formidable and will take centuries to achieve he will not falter or be discouraged until he establishes justice on earth.

The second Song (Isaiah 49:1-6) describes the Servant as despised and abhorred by the nation to which he comes. As for numbers his mission seems to fail. The Servant says, 'I have laboured to no purpose; I have spent my strength in vain'. However Yahweh's Servant is promised a gathering from Israel (49:5) and to be made 'a light to the Gentiles' – even 'to the ends of the earth' (49:6).

The third Servant Song (Isaiah 50:4-9) describes the devotional life of the Servant. He will be obedient and submit meekly to severe suffering. He will be beaten, mocked and spat upon. But he will not turn away from this terrible ordeal. The Servant exhorts sinners to repent and warns them that to walk in the light of their own making will end with disastrous consequences.

The meaning of a whole burnt offering conveys the notion of all-sufficiency. Christ's sacrifice is all-sufficient for our redemption. Some suggest that the Hebrew is, 'So shall he startle many nations.'¹ Sprinkling denotes far more than startling. Sprinkling with the blood of the atonement signifies effectual cleansing and redemption.

The impact of the Servant upon the nations is suggested by the chapters 54 and 55 which describe the proclamation of good news for the whole world expressed in the form of universal proclamation and invitation. These

invitations are based on the completed work of the Servant. The parallel in the New Testament is Luke 14:17, 'Come, for everything is now ready'.

The impact of the Servant is further developed in chapters 59 to 63 where he is portrayed as 'The Anointed Conqueror'.² The world-wide impact of the gospel will come through the power of the Holy Spirit. 'He will come like a pent-up flood' (59:19). His coming in power is against a dark background of rebellion and ignorance. 'See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples' (60:2). The LORD is grieved by the absence of justice. He is appalled that there is no one to intervene. Therefore he comes to work salvation himself. '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' (Isa 60:22).

Today in Western Europe this may seem like a fantasy. Matthew Henry reasons well when he pleads for patience as follows: 'It may seem to be delayed, and put off so long, that we are out of hopes for it; but as the Lord will do it, so he will *hasten* it; will do it with all convenient speed; though much time be passed before it is done, no time will be lost; he will *hasten it in its time*, in the proper time, in the season wherein it will be beautiful; he will do it in the time appointed by his wisdom, though not in the time prescribed by our folly. And this is really hastening it; for though it seem to tarry, it does not tarry if it come in God's time; for we are sure that that is the best time, which he that believes will patiently wait for.'

On the words, 'And kings will shut their mouths because of him. For what they were not told, they will see, and what they have not heard, they will understand,' (52:15) Calvin comments, 'Men are struck with bewilderment when the vast magnitude of the subject is such that it cannot be expressed, and it exceeds all power of language.'

The purpose of Yahweh that salvation should be proclaimed among the Gentile nations is declared in many places in the Old Testament. Genesis 12:3 is one example, 'All peoples on earth will be blessed through you,' and Psalm 22:27 is another, 'All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations will bow down before him.'

The apostle Paul cites Isaiah 52:15 in confirmation of his preaching the gospel to Gentile peoples who had never heard it before (Rom 15:21).

We come now to consider the second stanza.

Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not (Isa 53:1-3).

This rhetorical question, 'Who has believed our message?' anticipates that the gospel is incredible. Who could possibly believe it? Is it conceivable that this son of a carpenter who grew up in the ill-reputed village of Nazareth is *the* Messiah? How could a man so poor that he lived on hillsides possibly be the anticipated deliverer, the long-awaited Messiah? To compound the difficulty of faith in the Servant is the scandal of the cross. This same supposed deliverer could not even save himself. He ended up on a wooden cross as a criminal. How is it possible that this man hanging in abject misery and acute agony of mind and body is the Creator of the sun, moon and stars?

Isaiah anticipates the difficulty of faith when he asks the further question, 'And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?' Almighty God himself must reveal that this poor dying person is indeed the Son of God. He revealed it to the centurion on the day he was crucified. 'And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, heard his cry and saw how he died, he said, "Surely this man was the Son of God!"' (Mark 15:39). When Peter affirmed his faith in Jesus and said, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God,' Jesus replied, 'Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven' (Matt 16:16-17).

There was nothing in this sorrowful man's appearance to attract faith in him. To the Jews the claim to deity which came out clearly in his 'I am'

statements, such as 'I am the resurrection and the life', was ludicrous. The Jewish leadership in Jerusalem (the Sanhedrin) despised and rejected him.

There is nothing in the Bible to describe the human appearance of Jesus. All we know is that he looked like other men. His glory as the God-man was disguised as the text says, 'He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him.' The Jewish leaders looked for a deliverer who would rid the nation of Roman rule and exalt them. Calvin comments, 'The Jews did not think that the Redeemer would come in that condition or attire. When he came to be crucified their horror was greatly increased.'

The text, 'He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not' emphasises rejection of the Servant. Jesus surrounded himself with pastoral concerns of sickness, sorrow and grief. E J Young comments, 'They will praise his ethics, his teaching, declare that he was a good man and a great prophet, the only one who has answers to the social problems that today confront the world. They will not, however, acknowledge that they are sinners, deserving of eternal punishment, and that the death of Christ was a vicarious sacrifice, designed to satisfy the justice of God and reconcile an offended God to the sinner.' Calvin observes that rejection of the Servant is a culpable matter not only for those who saw him and despised him but says Calvin, 'All men are accursed and condemned for ingratitude in despising Christ, because they do not even consider him to be worthy of being looked at, but turn away their eyes as if from something detestable.'

In sending his Servant, Yahweh planned something infinitely more wonderful than a national deliverance which would be clothed with the trappings of pomp and grandeur. His plan was to deal once and for all with sin which has brought death and destruction to the human race. Yahweh's plan was to save sinners for time and eternity. And nowhere in all the Bible is this more clearly stated than in this fourth Servant Song.

Jesus never gave any hint that his mission was of a political nature. He made this plain when he said, 'For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many' (Mark 10:45). He told his disciples that he was going to suffer. 'And he said, "The

Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life” ’ (Luke 9:22).

The hymns that extol the Servant do not celebrate military success but rejoice in redemption.

*He breaks the power of cancelled sin,
He sets the prisoner free;
His blood can make the foulest clean;
His blood availed for me.*

Howard Jacobson, a most likeable TV personality, tells us that he is fully Jewish, not liberal and not orthodox, but simply Jewish. On 11 January 2009 at maximum viewing time on British TV he presented the subject of ‘Jesus the Jew’ as one in an eight-part series on Christianity.³ The main thrust of his presentation was that Jesus proved to be a disaster. His misguided followers, especially Paul, turned Jesus into Christianity and from Christianity has come the most terrible history of persecution of Jews who have been portrayed as the Christ-killers. Jacobson clearly does not understand the difference between sacral Christianity and evangelical biblical Christianity. Sacral Christianity is national in character in which all citizens are required to be Christian and those who deviate are persecuted. Our Jewish friends need to be reminded that the Jewish holocaust is not the only holocaust.⁴

There are many Islamic nations that are sacral. In some like Iran, to leave Islam and embrace Christ carries the death penalty for men. True Christianity is voluntary. Jesus does not advance his kingdom by the sword. His kingdom is in the heart. Sadly in preparing his program Jacobson relied on liberal theologians for advice. This led to confusion because liberal theologians do not believe the Bible.

Historically Jesus was rejected and despised by the Jewish nation to which he came. ‘He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognise him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God –

children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God' (John 1:10-13).

Of course not all Jews rejected Jesus. All Jesus' apostles were Jews and they heralded the good news of Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension across the Roman Empire. Now centuries later the Bible is the number one book translated into hundreds of languages. Bible believers who trust in Jesus for personal salvation are more numerous now and are increasing in numbers daily round the world. To them the arm of the Lord has been revealed.

Conclusion

Albert Barnes summarises the message of the first stanza well when he writes, 'No monarch on earth could have evinced such condescension as did the Son of God; none has been elevated to so high a rank in the universe as the Redeemer. That the Son of God should become a man; that his visage should be so disfigured by grief as to have been scarcely the aspect of a human being; that he should suffer and die as he did; and that he should be exalted as he is over this whole world, and have the most elevated place in the universe at the right hand of God, are all events fitted to excite the profoundest admiration.'

As believers we are always mindful of the vastness of the debt we owe our Saviour. At the communion table we partake of the bread and the wine. That gives opportunity to remember him in his sufferings for us. We then express our love and gratitude to him for his supreme saving sacrifice.

¹ The RSV has *stattle* and the ESV, NIV and NKJV put *stattle* as an alternative to *sprinkle* while the NLT has *sprinkle*. There are linguistic problems either way. John Calvin and E J Young prefer, 'So shall he sprinkle many nations.' Alec Motyer comments as follows, 'Blocher rightly says that "the burden of proof ...rests with those who would reject "sprinkle".' Yet the usage is uncommon. Isaiah however, could well have used it so, intending to increase the sense of enigma, which marks this stanza, about how the unique exaltation and unique suffering belong together.' *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, IVP, 1993, p. 426.

² *Ibid*, p 15.

³ This is one of eight perspectives on Christianity prepared by widely different presenters including ex-politician Michael Portillo and two Roman Catholics, Ann Widdecombe, MP, and Cherie Booth, QC. From the media blurbs it is evident that any idea of the real and central purpose of Christ's mission is not in sight in this series.

⁴ See RT 225 for article, 'The Holocaust of St. Bartholomew'.

Editor ERROLL HULSE, 75 Woodhill Road, Leeds LS16 7BZ
Associate Editors DAVID KINGDON, UK, TOM NETTLES, USA,
JOHN CAMPBELL, AUSTRALIA, MICHAEL HAYKIN, USA

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