

REFORMATION TODAY



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Websites www.reformation-today.org

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

<http://africanpastorsconference.com>



The photo above was taken at the SOLA5 Conference in the Netherlands (see page2). From left to right Bert Boer (pastor of a Baptist church in Deventer), Jeroen Bol (chairman of the George Whitefield Foundation), Gijs de Bree (pastor of a Baptist church in Kampen), Erroll Hulse, George van der Hoff (pastor of a Baptist church in Ede), Kees van Kralingen (elder of a Baptist church in Papendrecht), Erik Bouman (pastor of a Baptist church in Genk, Belgium), Michael Gorsira (pastor of a Baptist church in Delfzijl – also chairman of the Sola 5 Baptist committee) and Oscar Lohuis (itinerant preacher).

‘THE GIFT’

Readers of the previous two issues of Reformation Today will be interested to learn that Chapel Library have published a 16 page booklet summarising the life and conversion of Charles Chiniquy. Free copies of this booklet are available to readers of *Reformation Today*. Please contact Chapel Library directly if you live in the USA... (Chapel Library; 2603 W. Wright St., Pensacola, FL 32505; literature@mountzion.org). Other readers should contact Frederick Hodgson (See back inside cover).

Front cover picture – Stephen Nowak preaching at a meeting in Tanzania (see report page 31).

Editorial

In a parish church near Berthelsdorf, Germany, during a special Wednesday morning service, 13th August 1727, there was an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Participants left that meeting, ‘hardly knowing whether they belonged to earth or had already gone to heaven’. One of them wrote, ‘A great hunger after the Word of God took possession of us so that we had to have three services every day 5.00 am and 7.30 am and 9.00 pm.’ The outstanding zeal for missionary work by the Moravians, as they became known, is described in the article *Moravians and Missionary Passion*. The Moravians were gifted with extraordinary zeal and willingness to sacrifice everything to advance the gospel. They were willing to travel to the most remote and dangerous places where Christ had never been heard of. The Moravians cared little for doctrinal precision. That lack weakened them. However Moravians in Tanzania have multiplied more than in any other country. Stephen Nowak in his report describes their desire for the Word of God.

The Moravian pioneer missionaries in far off lands knew that they were upheld in prayer. We have to question our own personal commitment to fervent prayer. How does prayer feature in your local church? Derek Thomas, who teaches theology at Reformed Theological Seminary Jackson, Mississippi, gives twelve reasons why we need to gather at least once a week for the specific purpose of prayer. It is well known that it is the custom of Korean believers to meet daily to pray together albeit for a short period on their way to work. Is it not possible for us to meet once a week with the specific purpose of prayer?

Future issues of *Reformation Today* will describe the changes that took place in the French Church after Napoleon in the Nineteenth Century. In the middle of that century large numbers of French Canadians were converted after Charles Chiniquy, the respected Roman Catholic priest and pastor of many of them, was conquered by the grace of God. His story told in RT233 and RT234 is engagingly told in the booklet, ‘The Gift’ advertised on the front inside cover.

Is Reformation of the RC Church Possible? Charles Chiniquy’s experience which led to thousands becoming Protestants seems to show that the walls of tradition have been built so high that reformation will require a miracle.

SOLA5 Conference in the Netherlands

Kees van Kralingen

Under the name ‘Sola5 Baptisten’ a Dutch group of Baptist pastors and leaders organised this conference and designed a website to call Baptist churches back to their theological roots in the Reformation. They believe that more than ever the Dutch churches need the doctrines of grace, as taught and applied by Reformed Baptists worldwide, to counter current man-centred approaches. About 75 from the Netherlands and Belgium gathered on 26-27 March in Doorn for this first conference. Erroll Hulse was one of the speakers. The aim on this occasion was to show the value of a biblical Confession of Faith such as the Second London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689.

Michael Gorsira emphasised the importance of a Confession to help us to maintain a biblical form of church life and discipline and worship with God at the centre rather than being governed by man-centred approaches.

Erroll took chapter 13 of the 1689 on sanctification and showed how to preach on that subject using the Confession as a guide. His second address was How to use the 1689 Confession in a local church.

Kees van Kralingen opened up some key characteristics of the 1689 Confession which are of particular relevance today: chapter 1 of the 1689 Confession on the authority of Scripture, the particular position of the Confession on the liberty of the conscience together with the role of the civil magistrate (chapters 21 and 24), and the doctrine of the Church (chapter 26).

The conference included a time of prayer together which was outstanding, a lively Question and Answer time and Prayer and Sharing sessions. Another feature was consecutive edifying Bible readings on the Passion at the sessions. Oscar Lohuis preached the conference sermon on the subject of Stephen the first martyr (Acts 7). He explained how that grievous event was overruled to the advancement of the gospel. We all left inspired by excellent unity and fellowship and by edification received from the materials that were presented.

For details about this work, visit the website: www.sola5baptisten.nl

How to use the 1689 Confession

Editor

Why have a Confession of Faith? Joshua chapter four illustrates the fact that God intends that we have boundary markers in our history. When their children asked how they had come into the land of Canaan they could be reminded about the boundary markers.

‘So Joshua called together the twelve men he had appointed from the Israelites, one from each tribe, and said to them, “Go over before the ark of the LORD your God into the middle of the Jordan. Each of you is to take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the Israelites, to serve as a sign among you. In the future, when your children ask you, ‘What do these stones mean?’ tell them that the flow of the Jordan was cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD. When it crossed the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. These stones are to be a memorial to the people of Israel forever” ’(Josh 4:5-7).

As Bible believers we ask the question: How did we arrive at this point in history? We teach our children the Bible story line, namely, that we possess a record of the history of redemption in the Scriptures from Genesis to Revelation. We show them that the Bible is in two parts: the book of promise and the book of fulfilment. We show them too that in the book of Acts Luke describes the beginning of the Christian Church. The Church was born in Jerusalem and then spread to Judea and Samaria and then extended across the Roman Empire. Yes, but we are then asked the question, What has taken place since Acts chapter 28? The answer to that is derived from a selection of history books.¹

The 1689 Confession of Faith was published at what might be called a peak point in Church history. The seventeenth century was a time of extraordinary development. Expositions of the highest quality by pastors of outstanding spiritual giftedness were published. The teaching of these ministers is summarised in the Westminster Confession of 1647, then in the Savoy Confession of 1658 and also in the Second London Baptist Confession of Faith compiled in 1677 and published in 1689.

A tabular comparison of the Westminster, the Savoy Declaration and the 1689 with colour codes to highlight the differences is available from the following website: http://www.proginosko.com/docs/wcf_sdfo_lbcf.html

Whenever we preach from a historic Confession of Faith we must assert that we place the Confession under the authority of Scripture. Everything must be scrutinised by the Word of God.

Here are six ways in which we employ the 1689 Confession in the local church.

1. The Confession provides historical continuity.
2. The Confession is used to maintain the doctrinal purity of the pastors, elders and deacons.
3. The Confession is used for the instruction of candidates who apply for church membership.
4. The Confession is used as a means of maintaining unity with other Reformed and evangelical churches.
5. The Confession is used as a basis for church planting.
6. The Confession can be used as a check to ensure balanced doctrinal preaching.

1. *The Confession provides historical continuity.*

As a Reformed Baptist local church we identify with the most significant spiritual movements in the history of the Church. We do not have to reformulate the doctrine of the Trinity or the doctrine of the Person of Christ. These basic truths which were hammered out during the first five centuries after Christ are enshrined in the 1689. Also the five great *solas*² won during the time of the 16th - century Reformation are inter-woven into the Confession. The 1689 exemplifies the balance of doctrine, experience and practice bequeathed to us through three generations of Puritan divines. That is a most valuable legacy. The Reformation progressed and was applied to the Church so that we maintain the New Testament teaching on believers' baptism and the

concept of the gathered church under the leadership of elders. We hold that the Confession of Faith is subservient to Scripture and must always be subject to correction and improvement by Scripture. If we have corrections or improvements these can be made either in an introduction to the next edition or in appendices or footnotes.³ There is no need to rewrite the Confession. Attempts to write a better Confession have not succeeded. In 1966 Baptist leaders in the UK compiled a Confession, ‘Things most surely believed amongst us’. That was a useful and timely exercise. It came nowhere near replacing the 1689 and the compilers would be the first to deny that purpose.

The genius of the 1689 lies in its selection of principal or essential truths, and in its brevity. Application often involves cultural environments and specific pressures but the Confession is *not* a manual for daily Christian living. It is a summary of central doctrines and it reflects the Puritan characteristic of balance in doctrine, experience and practice.

Sam Waldron in his introduction to his excellent commentary on the 1689 Confession answers the objection that we need no creed but the Bible. He describes the heretic Arius who claimed to agree with the Bible. The way that his devious heresy could be highlighted was to form a clear statement on the divine and human natures of Christ and then challenge Arius to sign it. Of course he could not.⁴

This question of historical continuity is vital. We are not assemblies which are floating around aimlessly in space. We are part of Christ’s Church as it develops through the centuries. Names inscribed in the Lamb’s Book of Life are found in the letter to the Hebrews chapter eleven. That testimony of faith has continued through the years. We remember many martyrs and innumerable heroes of the faith. Heroes include not only those who have been illustrious in the public arena like martyrs Savonarola, Jerome and Hus, Latimer and Ridley, but also the unheralded, the non-famous, including a multitude of women who have endured suffering and afflictions with patience and maintained their profession of faith in gruelling circumstances.

Recently Frank Retief the presiding bishop (moderator) of CESA a Reformed denomination in South Africa suggested to me that the gospel is only one generation away from being lost.

An example of this is North Africa. ‘Africa was full of churches in the first centuries after the apostles – North Africa, that is. Churches, Bible schools, libraries and missionary efforts flourished across the Mediterranean coast of North Africa. Before the apostles set foot in Europe, the Church in Africa was advancing. And it grew for 600 years. Then almost overnight – in the mid-600s – the visible Church was nearly snuffed out, with the exception of Ethiopia and what is now southern Sudan. The forces of Islam extinguished entire swathes of Christian congregations. How could this happen? Why did this happen? Why did professing believers line up to turn in their Church memberships and receive tax benefits for converting to Islam? Church historian Mark Shaw in his excellent book, *The Kingdom of God in Africa* (Baker), tells us that not only had the Church become lifeless and ritualistic but that *leaders were no longer trained for Christian ministry*. Many had become merely church functionaries and not passionate evangelists and shepherds, grounded in God’s truth. What is to keep the professing Church in Africa today from being swept away by another wave of false teaching (and there are many)? The lesson we must learn from the past is clear – church leaders must be grounded in biblical truth and trained for Christian service. Those on the front line of church life must have their roots sunk deeply in sound theology and a biblical understanding of Christian ministry. Thankfully, countless national leaders, organisations, and missionaries have caught this vision and are passionate about equipping national shepherds to love and protect Christ’s Church.’⁵

2. *The Confession is used to maintain the doctrinal purity of the pastors, elders and deacons.*

If a new pastor is called to the church how can we know that he is reliable in what he believes? Of course we check on his life by consulting with the leaders of the church from which he comes. But how can we know if he is true to all the major truths of the Bible? We can go through them systematically but it will help if we ask one question. Which truths as expressed in the 1689 Confession do you reject? Since the Confession represents a summary of what we believe we expect to be taught faithfully and built up and made strong in those truths.

Likewise we cannot afford to allow division and confusion in the church by defection from the truths of the gospel by the church leaders, namely the elders and deacons. We should never presume that every candidate for the office of

elder or deacon understands and accepts from the heart the truths of God's Word. 1 Timothy 3:9 says of deacons, 'They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience.'

Sometimes I have asked members of Reformed Baptist churches if they have ever read the Confession of their church. Mostly the answer has been, No, I have never read the Confession! My next question, Do you possess one? Mostly the answer has been, I think so but I am not sure whether I can lay my hands on it.

3. *The Confession is used for the instruction of candidates who apply for church membership.*

There is nothing more exciting on earth than when a sinner is born again. 'If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come' (2 Cor 5:17). The new birth comes out of union with Christ by faith and by that union the believer has Christ's righteousness imputed to him. He receives the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). This glorious transformation requires appropriate wonder and praise. Entrance therefore into the body of Christ the Church both of the past and in its current expression in the local church is not a mundane, boring thing but a thrilling and important exercise.

Individuals who apply for baptism and church membership vary in character. Jim Renihan states this well, 'When individuals seek formally to become part of one of our assemblies, we are faced with a variety of questions: Are they believers? Have they professed their faith in Christ in baptism? Do they walk in newness of life? Do they understand the Christian faith? Do they understand who we are and why we believe what we do? Do they have previous church experience? If so, does that previous experience complement, parallel or contradict the practice of our church? What is the level of maturity? Each of these (and there are others) is an important practical question.'⁶

Sometimes those who apply for baptism and church membership are from other countries and struggle with the English language. Sometimes these applicants are seeking refugee status. Membership with a Christian church will enhance their application for refugee status. Great care is needed because of mixed motives. One test is to observe willingness to integrate with the assembly rather than maintaining their comfort zone with fellow refugees who speak the same language. In our church in Leeds we have found that it is wise

to prolong the time of testing. Also complex is the question of applicants who are very young. True faith is not going to decline through having to be patient. This can be difficult when the elders prefer to wait whilst the parents press for early baptism.

To summarise this section: it is important to familiarise new members of the church with the Confession. Every member should have a copy alongside the church constitution. The mistake frequently made today is to lack diligence in instructing new converts early while they are filled with wonder at the grace of God in their salvation. That is the ideal time to teach them the responsibilities of church membership, of tithing, the responsibilities of the Lord's Day, of attendance at and participation in the prayer meetings, and of the dangers of worldly standards especially with regard to purity and sexual morals. Early instruction about a disciplined life-style and church responsibilities is vital. Have you ever watched metal workers? You cannot mould cold metal. Metal needs to be fired up and then you can shape it. Conversion time is the time of first love and first zeal. To be shaped into Christian disciplines then can set the tone and pattern for years to follow. The devil soon makes his counter-attack and new converts need to be well equipped. Poor attendance at church meetings may partly be due to the lack of basic instruction at the vital time when entrance was made into membership and lack of teaching about the nature of the church and the responsibilities of individual members. Sadly in many churches a minority do all the work and the majority are spectators.

4. *The Confession is used as a means of maintaining unity with other Reformed and evangelical churches.*

Originally the First London Baptist Confession, 1644, was formulated and published to testify to orthodox belief.⁷

It was important to show that they had nothing to do with the appalling chaos of Münster where a section of Anabaptists had turned into a wild cult. 'It was essential to demonstrate that they were not radicals, subversively undermining the fabric of society. To the contrary, they were law-abiding citizens, who were misrepresented and misunderstood by many around them.'⁸ (Anabaptists formed a very large and very diverse body spread across Europe. Most did not deserve the bad press and persecution meted out to them.)

Likewise the 1689 (formulated in 1677) was published with the primary purpose of showing unity with other Reformed constituencies namely the

Presbyterians and Congregationalists. Socinianism (the equivalent of present day liberalism) and Roman Catholicism were rejected. Also repudiated were the errors of Quakerism (the equivalent of present-day charismatic practice), Millenarianism, Arminianism and Antinomianism.⁹

A present-day example of the Confession's use for unity is the Yorkshire Reformed Ministers' Fraternal. About 35 ministers are eligible to attend the monthly meetings. Adherence to one of the Reformed Confessions is mandatory. Another example of the use of the Confessions is the organisation of the African Pastors' Conferences. All evangelical pastors are welcome to the benefits of the conferences but it is mandatory for the leaders to adhere to one of the Confessions and all the books are required to reflect the doctrinal standards of the Confessions.

5. *The Confession is used as a basis for church planting.*

Jim Renihan writing for *The Founders' Journal* which circulates mostly among Southern Baptists in the USA describes the zeal for church planting of the first Calvinistic Baptists in England. 'The well-ordered church was so central to the redemptive purposes of God that any kind of evangelistic thrust must seek, as its highest goal, to establish new assemblies. Evangelism was not carried out simply to seek conversions. Churches had to be planted. Those who received the gift of salvation were expected to become part of a well-ordered church. The Baptists could not conceive of evangelism apart from church planting. Converts were to be baptised, and formed into a church by a (to use Benjamin Keach's term) "wise masterbuilder".' ¹⁰

As the addition of a transformed soul to an assembly is a most exciting matter so is the planting of a new church. All those involved need to be engaged in working on a most suitable constitution in co-operation with the sending mother church. Also the Confession of Faith must not be taken for granted. It needs to be revisited and the contents and meaning understood by the leaders and members of the new church.

6. *The Confession can be used as a check to ensure balanced doctrinal preaching.*

How does a pastor know whether he is teaching the whole counsel of God as he is required to do? (Acts 20:27; 2 Cor 4:2). Possibly the best check is to read

through the Confession of Faith and ascertain subjects that may have been neglected or taken for granted. For instance it may have been years since a sermon was preached on subjects such as creation, divine providence, God's covenant, free will, adoption or the law of God. Indeed even such central subjects such as justification and sanctification may have been neglected. The Confession also reminds us of marriage which is under massive attack in society and in the media. Marriage and the family should be the subject of teaching at least once a year. The state of souls after death is often neglected as is the subject of eternal punishment (the 1689 chapters 31 and 32).

In some Presbyterian denominations it is mandatory to run an annual series on the Confession. Some Reformed denominations in the Netherlands require that the ministers maintain a session every week teaching consecutively through the Heidelberg Catechism. In another article I will address the subject of how to preach from the Confession of Faith.

¹ David J Bosch outlines the history of missions in six periods which he calls paradigms:

1. The apocalyptic paradigm of primitive Christianity
2. The Hellenistic paradigm of the patristic period
3. The medieval Roman Catholic paradigm
4. The Protestant (Reformation) paradigm
5. The modern Enlightenment paradigm
6. The emerging ecumenical paradigm

Transforming Mission. Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission, Orbis Books, 584 pages. Eighteenth edition 2003.

² *Sola scriptura, Sola gratia, Sola fide, Solus Christus, Soli Deo Gloria*.

³ Many editions have been published of the popular 1689 Confession in contemporary English which flies under the title *A Faith to Confess*. It is available from Evangelical Press. A seven page introduction discusses several issues arising out of the Confession.

⁴ Sam Waldron. *A Modern Exposition, 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith*, Evangelical Press, 490 page hardback, 1989, reprinted 2009.

⁵ This description of the collapse of Christianity in North Africa was written by missionary pastor Karl Peterson.

⁶ Jim Renihan. *The Doctrinal and Practical Standards for Local Church Membership According to the Bible and the Second London Confession of Faith*. Circular letter for the 2005 ARBCA General Assembly. <http://www.sycamorebaptistchurch.com/CLR.html>

⁷ Jim Renihan. *Confessing the Faith in 1644 and 1689*.

<http://www.reformedbaptistinstitute.org/articles/cponessing.htm>

⁸ *ibid*.

⁹ The full story and circumstances of the origin of the First London Baptist Confession of Faith, the Westminster Confession, the Savoy Declaration and the questions of church government, believers' baptism and unity with Presbyterians and Congregationalists are described in *Our Baptist Heritage*, 117 pages paperback, published by Chapel Library, 2603 West Wright Street, Pensacola, Florida 32505, USA.

¹⁰ Jim Renihan. *Founders' Journal*. Church Planting and the London Baptist Confessions of Faith, part one. <http://www.founders.org/journal/fj37/article1.html>

The Weekly Prayer Meeting

Derek Thomas

Should the weekly prayer meeting be part of my Christian life? 'The advantages of a well conducted prayer-meeting,' wrote John Angel James, 'are great and numerous.' But what might these advantages be?

I will suggest twelve reasons.

1. The church was conceived at a prayer meeting. What were the members of the church doing in those days prior to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost? Having been expressly told to wait in Jerusalem for the promise of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4-8), the disciples, the Lord's brothers and the women met together in an upper room and 'continued with one accord in prayer and supplication...' (Acts 1:14). The New Testament church was born as a result of a prayer meeting including the women. Two factors are worth highlighting. They prayed 'with one accord'. Luke uses a word (*homothymadon*), a favourite word of Luke's, which elsewhere means 'united' (4:24; 15:25). They also 'continued' in prayer. Luke uses a word (*proskartereō*) a word which means to be 'busy', or 'persistent'. Paul echoed the idea by using the same word in two of his letters, exhorting the Romans to continue

'steadfastly in prayer' (Rom 12:12), and to the Colossians 'to continue earnestly in prayer' (Col 4:2).

2. The New Testament church continued as it had begun. Immediately after Pentecost the church is described as continuing 'steadfastly...in prayers' (Acts 2:42). Later, when the Sanhedrin arrested Peter and John and warned them not to preach any more in the name of Jesus it appears that the rest of the church were in a prayer meeting elsewhere in the city (possibly the same upper room as in Acts 1). After the two apostles were released, they went and joined with the rest of the church and 'raised their voice to God with one accord' (Acts 4:24). Before Peter and John resumed their preaching work again, they held a time of prayer (Acts 4:31). When Peter was eventually imprisoned for preaching the gospel, the church responded with yet another prayer meeting (Acts 12:5,12). Before the outset of the first missionary journey, the church set aside time for a prayer meeting (Acts 13:1). In appointing church elders and other workers, prayer meetings were held (Acts 6:4-6; 14:23). Paul and Silas continued the practice, holding a midnight prayer meeting in a prison in Philippi (Acts 16:25). And before saying farewell to the Ephesian elders

on the shores of Miletus, Paul knelt down and prayed with them (Acts 20:36). When Paul was returning to Jerusalem after his third missionary journey, the ship on which he sailed stopped at Tyre to load cargo. Paul spent the night in the company of the church there and before parting the next day, men, women and children held a prayer meeting on the beach next to the ship (Acts 21:5). And in a storm on another ship which ran aground, Paul organised yet another prayer meeting (Acts 27:29).

3. The prayer meeting calls down the power by which God's kingdom advances. When Jesus saw the multitudes, 'He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest truly is plentiful, but the labourers are few"' (Matt 9:36-37). And his request to the church? 'Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest' (Matt 9:38). The kingdom of God advances by prayer meetings in which the blessing of God is implored. Souls are won by prayer. The Church grows and prospers through the corporate praying of God's children.

A wonderful illustration of this is provided for us in Exodus 17:8-13. God's people were in battle with the Amalekites. The Israelites were greatly outnumbered. Moses told Joshua to choose men and go out to fight the enemy. But he also said that

he would stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in his hand and pray with Aaron and Hur. As long as Moses held up his hands in prayer, the people of God prevailed in the battle below in the valley. But, when Moses' arms grew heavier, and fell from their position of intercession, then God's people began to lose in their battle. So someone found a large rock and put it under Moses as a seat, and Aaron and Hur supported his arms, one standing on either side of him. The three constituted a prayer meeting of intercession on behalf of their soldiers below. The prayer meeting was the deciding factor.

4. Our Lord Jesus felt the need for prayer meetings. It is surely an amazing fact that in the Garden of Gethsemane, when our Lord was facing the consequences of his Father's will he should die as the sinner's substitute, that he should have expected the prayer support of his closest disciples (Matt 26:40). As the unfolding revelation of what lay before him became clearer, he felt the need for the prayers of sinners to uphold him! How much more do we need the support of one another in prayer meetings as we struggle against the principalities and powers that are set to destroy us. When the apostle Paul exhorted the Ephesian Christians to pray 'with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit...for all the saints' he surely intended that they should gather together for prayer (Eph 6:10-20).

5. Prayer meetings demonstrate our covenant relationship. Initially God's covenant was essentially individual. God said to Abraham: 'And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant' (Gen 17:7). But at Sinai, all the people redeemed from Egypt entered into covenant with the Lord. God's covenant at Sinai secured the nation of Israel, the people of God (Exod 19:5-6). That is why so many of the psalms are prayers expressed in the plural 'we'. The psalmists' troubles were the troubles of the people of God; his joys were the joys of the people of God (e.g. Psalms 44, 46, 60, 67, 68, 74, 75, 80, 85). These psalms tell us that we belong together; we are the body of Christ; we have similar needs and fears.

Corporately at prayer meetings we express our needs and concerns to God. Thus, prayer meetings remind us that as Christians we belong to the same family. In a sermon on 2 Samuel, John Calvin reminded his Genevan congregation that every time we say the Lord's Prayer, repeating those words 'Our Father' we are reminded of our obligation to pray together. When we pray to him, although we do so individually, we say: 'Give us this day *our* daily bread, and forgive us *our* debts' (Matt 6:11-12). The request is not: 'Lord give *me* my daily bread.' We pray in unity with others. We are the family of God. Together, we are the body of

Christ. We were meant to gather together and talk to our Maker in prayer meetings.

6. The 16th-century Reformation can be attributed to committed and disciplined prayer. Recent studies of the cause of the Reformation have highlighted major influential factors in medieval Europe. What happened in October 1517 was the result of preparatory factors in the lives of individuals and churches in the preceding centuries. Among them, the *Devotio Moderna*. This was a reform movement which grew out of the Brethren of the Common Life. This was initiated by Gerard Groote and spread all over northern and eastern Europe during the 14th and 15th centuries. This movement was characterised by an effort to regain the type of Christianity seen in the early chapters of Acts. The movement emphasised fellowship (almost communal in nature) and prayer as a means to advance reform in the Church. This was one of several movements that focused on prayer for reform in the period before the Reformation. Our prayer meetings may, in God's providence, pave the way for reformation in the future; we may not see it ourselves but we may well have a vital part in bringing it about.

7. Prayer meetings have been God's way of bringing about revivals. One of the most encouraging examples is the prayer revival which began in New York City in 1857. Born in 1809

and converted in 1842 Jeremiah Calvin Lanphier became a city missionary. He advertised a midday prayer meeting in Fulton Street in downtown New York. At the first meeting he was the only one present for thirty minutes. Gradually six came. A week later twenty attended. After that the numbers escalated. It then became a daily prayer meeting. Subsequently this turned into a revival rather like the rising waters described by the prophet Ezekiel (Ezek 47). Within six months 10,000 businessmen were praying for revival. Within two years it is estimated that some two million people had been added to the Church.

This period turned out to be a widespread revival. An example is Ballymena in Northern Ireland where a certain Mrs Colville had been used by God in the conversion of a young man called James McQuilkin. He in turn led three of his friends to Christ. The four met together in an old schoolhouse during the winter of 1857 and 1858 in order to pray for revival. By the end of 1858 the numbers meeting had grown to fifty. In 1859 it is estimated that some 100,000 were converted throughout Ireland.

In Isaiah we read, 'I have posted watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem; they will never be silent day or night. You who call on the LORD, give yourselves no rest, and give him no rest till he establishes Jerusalem and makes her the praise of the earth' (Isa 62:6-7).

8. Prayer meetings have led to the fulfilment of missionary expansion as envisaged by the Great Commission.

The movement of God known as 'The Forgotten Revival' took place in the UK from about 1790 to about 1830. Jonathan Edwards' treatise, 'A humble attempt to promote extraordinary prayer' took time to take hold in England. This small book expounding Zechariah 8:20-23 made its way via Scotland through John Erskine (1721-1803) to John Ryland Jr (1725-1825) who shared it with John Sutcliff (1752-1814). John Sutcliff took the message to heart and made a call to prayer to his denomination in 1784. This call was for prayer for one hour the first Monday of every month. In his call he said, 'The grand object of prayer is to be that the Holy Spirit may be poured down on our ministers and churches, that sinners may be converted, the saints edified, the interest of religion revived, and the name of God glorified.'

Prayer spread and after several years of faithfulness God sent a revival, not only to the Calvinistic Baptists, but to churches across England. Special prayer meetings were organised. This had an extraordinary outcome for the Calvinistic Baptists. From that time doctrinal reform took place and missionary effort (William Carey) was inspired. Calvinistic (Particular) Baptists tripled in number in the next fifty years while the Methodists experienced even greater growth

from 72,000 in 1791 to 360,000 in 1850. In his call Sutcliffe had a call that comes to us today, too: 'Surely we have love enough for Zion to set apart one hour at a time, twelve times in a year, to seek her welfare.'

9. Prayer meetings change history. We may think that in a world as complicated as ours, our prayer meetings are going to accomplish very little. This is the reasoning of unbelief. In 1 Chronicles, in an otherwise rather dull chapter full of lists of genealogies, is the mention of a man called Jabez whose faithful praying changed the course of his life. He asked for help: 'Oh, that you would bless me indeed, and enlarge my territory, that your hand would be with me, and that you would keep me from evil, that I may not cause pain!' (1 Chron 4:9-10). His simple and direct praying changed the course of his life. The collective praying of God's people uttered at a prayer meeting can do likewise. In time of national strife our prayer meetings ought to be full!

In the time of Queen Elizabeth I the Spanish were planning to invade and among other things, enforce Roman Catholicism on the newly reformed Protestant Church. As the Spanish admirals gathered hundreds of ships in preparation, God's praying people prepared another task force to meet them. In congregations all over England they fell to their knees in urgent prayer. The Armada set out in

the spring of 1588, but never landed in England. After several skirmishes in the English Channel, terrific storms came up which scattered the Spanish fleet, driving many of the ships so far off course that they returned home by sailing around the north of Scotland!

10. Prayer meetings deal death blows to the enemy. In the time of good King Jehoshaphat, a large number of enemies had poured in against Judea (2 Chron 20). Although God's people were outnumbered, they were still trusting him and had decided to go out and fight for all they were worth. Jehoshaphat mobilised the army, but he also asked the people of Israel to fast and pray before they took action (2 Chron. 20:3).

Assembling the people for battle, he did an interesting thing, a very odd thing! He ordered the women and children to come out and stand in front of the army (made up of their husbands and fathers). Next, he had the priests and the temple choir come out and they led the congregation in praise. As they began to sing and to praise God, his power fell and the soldiers in the enemy army began to destroy one another. The plan of Satan had been to wipe out Israel and thus prevent the coming of a Messiah who could bring salvation. But he was foiled by the praises sung by tiny children! Satan's troops were routed by killing one another! When God's people came to the scene, all that was

left were the heaps of dead bodies, laden with so much spoil that it took three whole days to carry it all away!

How could a thing like that happen? The key is given in Psalm 22:3 which says: 'But you are holy, who inhabit the praises of Israel.' In other words, when God's people pray and praise him there is a sense in which a special presence falls from heaven with power to expel evil. It is said that the Devil hates to hear singing and prayer. Perhaps he cannot sing a single note! It is certain that he never prays. Prayer meetings ensure his defeat.

11. Prayer meetings release blessings already in store. Why pray? Everyone has asked that question at some time or another. Speaking in terms of absolute reassurance to God's people in captivity, God promises them that they will return to their land again. God will bring it about in his sovereign power. The thing is certain. And yet he says to them: 'I will also let the house of Israel inquire of me to do this for them' (Ezek 36:37). Again, the clear implication seems to be that God expects his people to gather for collective prayers of intercession. Zechariah illustrates a similar situation, assuring his listeners of God's blessing, and at the same time informing them that God will hear their prayers (Zech 10:6). God has promised us many things, but he still wants to hear us ask him for them. We should not disappoint him by our neglect of the prayer meeting.

12. Prayer meetings are the best means of encouraging ministers of the gospel. Ask any preacher what he desires most of God's people and he will tell you that it is the prayers of the congregation. Paul requested prayer-support from the Roman Christians immediately after telling them of his travel plans: 'Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in your prayers to God for me, that I may be delivered from those in Judea who do not believe, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, that I may come to you with joy by the will of God, and may be refreshed together with you' (Rom 15:30-2). Several things are worth noting about this passage. First, that Paul 'exhorts' ('begs' in NKJV; the same word, *parakaleō*, as in 12:1: 'I beseech you therefore, by the mercies of God...'). Second, that he uses an extraordinary verb *sunagonisasthai* ('strive together') emphasising the fact that it was the corporate prayers of God's people that the apostle desired. Every preacher would echo these sentiments. They are powerless and ineffective without the blessing of God upon their ministries and prayer meetings are God's appointed means of obtaining these urgently needed blessings.

For these reasons, every Christian should make every effort to attend a prayer meeting.

Is Reformation of the R C Church Possible?

Editor

Matthew Brennan, pastor of the Reformed Baptist church, Clonmel, Republic of Ireland, writes, 'We just do not know the full extent of the sexual abuse that has occurred within the Roman Catholic Church here in Ireland. The population of Ireland is 6.2 million with 73% of those being Roman Catholic. Two special reports that deal with the abuse have been published but they only deal with abuse in two dioceses, Ferns and Dublin. The reading is grim. The covering-up so that the truth was not discovered, the moving the offenders to other parishes, the lack of leadership and many other failures have been highlighted. But we wonder if the Church will come clean and bring all into the light or will the media expose the truth and then the Church authorities respond?

'The cover-up goes right up to the highest leaders within the Church. I think what makes the media excitable is the constant discovering of new cases. I also think many Catholics are disillusioned by the drip, drip of these same new cases. Should every diocese in the country be investigated? Why stop at Ireland? It is not just the Irish Church that is under scrutiny, there are revelations of such abuse all over the world at the present! The Church's sins along with the other national problems have made the Irish far more critical of authority figures. This I feel is a good thing because now you have to gain the respect of the people. How should an Irish Christian respond in the present situation? I do not think there should be a pharisaic spirit towards the Catholic Church; there may very well be skeletons in our cupboards that may tumble out and shame us. It would seem that the number of priests involved in these crimes is a minority and we ought to be careful not to brand all priests as abusers. We ought to be very prayerful that people will seek the perfect Priest who can deal with their sin forever. We should do all we can to point people towards Jesus Christ. Maybe advertise Bible studies of the *Rediscovering Jesus* type. In that way we are not knocking the Catholic Church but we are presenting the gospel message in a positive way.'

It is true that in the present climate 'knocking' the Roman Catholic Church is likely to have the effect of our Catholic friends becoming even more defensive of their Church. Having said that, it is needful for leaders to call for an end to enforced celibacy for the priesthood. This can be illustrated by the simple story of a negro prayer meeting in the old Southern States of America where

a brother kept on lamenting and repeating in his prayer that he was beset by 'dem cobwebs of sin in my heart'. One day the exasperated pastor cried out, 'Lord, kill dat spider!' In other words, Go to the root of the problem.

When Martin Luther was threatened with excommunication in 1520 Papal decrees were issued demanding that books written by Luther should be burned publicly. In many places it was impossible to implement this decree because Luther was so popular. However bonfires were lit at Cologne and Mainz. As the threat to burn his books came nearer to Wittenburg Luther determined to combat fire with fire.¹

A meeting was arranged on December 10th 1520. A crowd of students and lovers of the gospel gathered together and marched through the streets to the Dung Gate outside of which it was the practice to burn rubbish. There a bonfire was prepared. Systematically the papal decrees were burned. Last of all Martin drew from his coat the Papal proclamation of excommunication (*Exsurge Domine* - Arise, O Lord!) and threw it into the flames.

This marked the irrevocable and formal break with the pope and with Rome.

During the next two weeks Luther documented a treatise with the title, *Why the Books of the pope and his disciples were burned by Doctor Martin Luther*.

This is a statement describing 30 papal decrees. In some instances Luther adds his comments.

Here are some of the papal claims:

The sun symbolises the papal, the moon the secular power in Christendom.

The pope has in his heart full power of all laws.

Even if the pope were so wicked that he would lead innumerable people in great masses to the devil, nevertheless no one would be permitted to punish him for it.

Next to God the salvation of all Christendom depends on the pope.

Christ's priesthood was transferred to the pope from St Peter.

The pope has the power to make laws for the Christian church.

The pope has forbidden marriage to the whole priesthood.

Luther comments: ‘He thereby increases many sins and scandals without cause, contrary to God’s command.’

The pope has the power to interpret and to teach Holy Scripture according to his will and allows no one to interpret it otherwise than he wants.

The pope does not derive authentic existence, strength, and dignity from Scripture but Scripture from him, which is one of the main articles.

Luther comments: ‘These and similar articles which are without number – all of them aim at exalting the pope above God and man. Everyone, even God and the angels, is subject to him, while he is subject to no one.’ – ‘The pope is a god on earth over everything heavenly, earthly, spiritual, and secular, and all is his own. No one is permitted to say to him: “What are you doing?”’

What has changed since 1520? Have these decrees been revoked? If so when? And by whom?

Writing in the *Free Church Witness* Pastor Malcolm Watts of Salisbury maintains the view that *anti* stands not only for ‘in the place of’ but also means *contra* which conveys the meaning of contradiction. It is not as though the pope would shoot Christ but rather that he upholds doctrine that directly contradicts him. This is how Pastor Watts expresses this:

‘The Roman Antichrist *opposeth* and (*exceedingly*) *exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped* – that is, he stands in opposition to Christ, putting *himself* in the highest position. He sets himself *above all that is called God, or that is worshipped*. Despite the restrictions of space in such an article as this, it is not at all difficult to show that the pope “opposes” the Lord Jesus Christ: his Person, by denying the reality of his presence on earth as Head of his Church (*contra* Matt 28:20); his office, by sanctioning a mediatorial priesthood and the intercession of the saints (*contra* Jn 10:9; 14:6; 1 Tim 2:5); his work, by making the Mass “a true, proper and propitiatory sacrifice” (*contra* Heb 9:24-28; 10:12); his gospel, by teaching that baptism remits the guilt of original sin and that subsequent good works are “meritorious” (*contra* Acts 16:31; Rom 5:1); his commandments, by maintaining the Rule of Faith is not the Bible only, but the Church, the Fathers, the Ecclesiastical Traditions, the Councils, and the pope (*contra* Matt 15:3,6; 22:29); his worship, by adding ritual, ceremonies, Mariolatry, images, and Saint-worship (*contra* Matt 28:20; 1 Cor 11:2); and his people, by persecuting the Paulicians, the Albigenes, the Waldenses, the Hussites, the Lollards, and the Huguenots, not to mention the English Reformers and martyrs (*contra* Mk

9:38-40; 2 Cor 10:4). With respect to this last point, it is estimated that the Church of Rome has been responsible for more than 50 million martyrs.²

Over time the papacy has assumed a position which is both in the place of Christ and contradictory to Christ's teaching. Some Evangelicals are not persuaded that 2 Thessalonians 2:3-9 describes the papacy. This applies more in the USA where some Presbyterians have deleted paragraph 4 in chapter 25 from the Westminster Confession of Faith. American soil has not been soaked with the blood of martyrs like the soil of England has. Also America is the scene of dispensationalism, an elaborate and very confusing eschatology which is the source of much muddled thinking. All the 16th - century Reformers and all the 17th - century Puritans believed that the Papacy fulfils 2 Thessalonians 3:3-9. This interpretation means that this scripture has an application which has been relevant throughout the two-millennia history of the Christian Church. Opposite to this interpretation is the view that we have to look for an antichrist in the future. So far there has been nothing remotely resembling the criteria of 2 Thessalonians 2:3-9.³

Doctrines which contradict the Bible have accumulated: purgatory in 593, worship of images and relics (786), celibacy of the priesthood (1079), the Inquisition (1184), sale of indulgences (1190), transubstantiation (1215), adoration of the wafer (1414), the cup forbidden to the people (1414), tradition placed on the same footing with the Bible at the Council of Trent (1545), apocryphal books added to the Bible (1546), immaculate conception of the virgin Mary (1854), the infallibility of the pope in matters of faith and morals (1870) and the assumption of the virgin Mary bodily into heaven (1950).

In a letter to *The Times* Rabbi Dr Jonathan Romain of Maidenhead points out that 'while past misdemeanours and cover-ups are still coming to light it is not possible to talk about "a new future" as some Catholic bishops do. 'What is needed is a large and highly public act of contrition.' In response to that suggestion by the rabbi is the question, Is that really getting to the root of the problem? Surely a thorough-going reformation is what is needed. How about getting rid of all the anti-biblical doctrines that have accrued? Is it possible for the Roman Catholic Church to undergo a reformation?

¹ *Luther's Works*, vol 31, Concordia, page 381ff.

² *Free Church Witness*, March 2010, Published by the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing). This is a series of three articles beginning with the March issue.

³ *ibid*. Also see Erroll Hulse's exegesis of 2 Thessalonians 2:3-9, *The Puritans and the Promises*, Westminster Conference Papers for 1999.

Wang Mingdao and his Good Confession

Bob Davey

The 1937-1945 Chinese war with Japan took place within China. The invasion by Japan led to major disruptions to life in China. In the extraordinary providence of God, during the same period, there was a marked expansion of the gospel in Free China. A spiritual awakening and revival took place among university students. It started in 1939 and lasted throughout the period and up to the Communist takeover of China in 1949.

In this article we will trace the extraordinary testimony of Wang Mingdao with the Japanese and later with the Communists. Then we will trace the history of the awakening and revival.

The beginning of the war with Japan

On 7 July 1937 there was a clash between Chinese and Japanese troops at the Marco Polo Bridge outside Peking (Beijing) leading to the bloody invasion of China proper from Manchuria by Japan, which only ended with the surrender of the Japanese at the end of the Second World War in 1945.

In that same month of July 1937, there in Peking, the building of the Christian Tabernacle was completed and dedicated on 1 August 1937. Wang Mingdao was the pastor (though he regarded himself as only one of the deacons) with a membership of about 570. A week later the Japanese troops entered Peking.

Over many years Wang had built up the church membership on fidelity to Scripture and a regenerate membership. He looked for the marks of a Christian in the life and spiritual fruitfulness before admittance to baptism. This included leading someone else to Christ! Where would our church membership numbers be today if this test were applied? Certainly, in the view of this writer, it ought to be in terms of call to the pastoral office.

Wang Mingdao and the Japanese

Amazingly, Wang Mingdao was able to preach faithfully in his pulpit in Peking right through the war years. His experience gives insight into what

many faithful Christians had to endure during those years of enemy occupation.

The first difficulty to be faced concerned the continued publication of his magazine *The Spiritual Food Quarterly*, which had a widespread circulation in China. The Japanese issued a directive commanding all future publications in Peking to insert four slogans drawn up by the Japanese Army Bureau. Disobedience would be severely punished. Rather than publish political and God-dishonouring slogans in his widely distributed Christian magazine Wang Mingdao, on advice, chose not to publish at all. He then was convicted of the sins of disobedience to God and of cowardice. His wife asked him, "Are you prepared to be arrested, examined and jailed?" He replied "I am prepared." She said, "Then you must go and act as God has shown you." He published without the slogans and sent copies to the Bureau as required. They did not even communicate with him and it was his happy testimony that in the eight years of Japanese occupation at no time was *The Spiritual Food Quarterly* 'adulterated with political matter'.

Immediately after Japan declared war on the USA and Great Britain in December 1941 all places of worship established or financed by American and British missionary societies were closed and sealed. The Tabernacle being a totally indigenous church was spared. Foreigners whose country was at war with Japan were rounded up and sent to internment camps, such as at Weihsien (Weifang). This was the camp where the famous Olympic athlete Eric Liddell was interned and where he died in 1945. He was a missionary serving with the London Missionary Society. The Oscar winning film *Chariots of Fire* portrays the life of Liddell.

A second major difficulty arose for Wang Mingdao when the leaders of all the churches in Peking met to set up a committee called The Peking Christian Preservation Committee. They were to meet at the hall of the Ministry of Home Affairs. Wang Mingdao refused to go. He believed that as the church leaders were going to seek advice from the Japanese instead of looking to God alone for direction, the churches could not avoid accepting the conditions the Japanese would impose. This indeed proved to be the case. Wang saw this as a breach of the biblical principle of separation of Church and State, an attack on the only Headship and Lordship of Christ in his Church. The scripture that convinced him was clear, 'What part has a believer with an unbeliever?' (2 Cor 6:14-16). Also the same scripture passage applied to the many false teachers in the churches which were unfaithful to the biblical gospel and who

were taking the lead in what then became The North China Christian Federation Promotion Committee.

Attempts to persuade the Tabernacle to join the puppet organisation gave way to threats as participation became compulsory. After a funeral Wang Mingdao met a Japanese Peking pastor Rev Odakamo who also tried to persuade him to join. Then finally on 30 April 1942 came an official letter from the Committee who demanded participation and a formal response. Wang Mingdao entered his personal 'Gethsemane'. He knew the Japanese could order the church closed and he and others arrested, imprisoned and even killed by the Japanese military. All the arguments for and against with their practical implications tossed and turned in Wang's mind that night. After a severe inner struggle his answer by letter was 'no' to participation. He was kept waiting in suspense by the Japanese until summoned to the Japanese Cultural Investigation Bureau on 10 October 1942, Chinese National Day. Riding on his bicycle, singing the hymn 'Stand up, Stand up for Jesus', he attended. Wang was invited to participate in the leadership of The North China Christian Federation about to be inaugurated. He explained that 'On principle, the Tabernacle cannot associate with any organisation or establishment.' Told that the Japanese had decided on the unification of all the churches and it must be achieved, Wang replied "As I obey the Lord whom I have served and as I keep the Truth which I have believed, I will not obey any man's command that goes against the will of God. I have already prepared myself to pay any price and make any sacrifice but I will not change the decision I have made." He politely but firmly refused to discuss the matter further. Marvellously (for the Japanese were brutal toward any sign of defiance) the Japanese authorities left him and the Tabernacle alone for the duration, except they managed to install a spy, to spy on activities, as gatekeeper at the Tabernacle. Those 'activities' led to the gatekeeper's conversion!

The experience of Wang Mingdao is worth recording at length because the principles for which he stood have caused a division among Protestant believers and also between Protestant churches in China during the Communist era since 1949. To conform or not to conform to State control of the Church and its agenda is the question.

The Communists in power

On 1 October 1949 Mao Zedong proclaimed the birth of the People's Republic of China. As atheists and humanists, the Communists believed all religion was

superstition and would vanish away through the process of re-education. So they introduced a policy of strict State control of religion until religion had died a natural death and become history. For the Protestant Church they issued the *Christian Manifesto* in August 1950. This required an admission from Christians that the Church had been a tool of imperialism. From now on they were to give their first and foremost loyalty and obedience to the Communist Party and purge themselves of all imperialistic influences, which included all foreign missionaries. Implementation of this policy would be through the Three-Self Reform Movement (later called the Three-Self Patriotic Movement) which was to be controlled by the Religious Affairs Bureau made up of Communist Party officials.

Y T Wu (Wu Yaozong, 1893-1979) was appointed leader of the Chinese Protestants by the Communists. He was made the president of the official Three-Self Reform Movement (TSM) from 1951 until his death in 1979. Wu saw his task as 'saving the Church' by finding a way to co-exist with the totalitarian atheistic state. In this task he was single-minded. For him it was the Church, the structure, that needed to be saved, even if it meant complete subservience to the China Communist Party of which he was a member. Wu had no time for dogmatic doctrinal Christianity. He bore an unbridled animosity towards Evangelicals and their teachers. To him they were a threat to everything he believed. Wang Mingdao had been a fierce critic of Y T Wu and his liberal theology over the years. A confrontation was inevitable.

Y T Wu President of the Three-Self Movement

Y T Wu was born on 4 November 1893 to a non-Christian family in Guangdong province. He came to faith at a mass rally conducted by Sherwood Eddy in 1918 and was baptised a Congregationalist. By the end of 1920 Y T Wu had become a secretary of the student department of the Peking YMCA. He opposed the Communists. In 1924 he went to the USA to receive a theological education at Union Theological Seminary and Columbia University. His M.A. was received in 1927 for a dissertation on William James' *Doctrine of Religious Belief*. In 1927 Wu returned to the YMCA at Shanghai. From 1932 he was in charge of publications of the Association Press of the YMCA. In 1945 he started the magazine *Tianfeng* which has been the main magazine of the Protestant Church on mainland China ever since. He was a thorough liberal in his theology.

Y T Wu's thinking evolved in three stages. The first stage was between 1920-1930 when he was a *Christian pacifist*. He believed the essence of the gospel

to be in the power of love, 'the way of love' as exemplified by Christ. In 1927 Wu organised the China Christian Student Movement. He still opposed Communism. He said, 'The advocacy of the class struggle, the use of brutal force, terrorism, the breaking down of all moral virtues, were their (the Communist) ideal methods and these were to be abhorred. The Chinese people hold an entirely different philosophy of life.' Wu admired Mahatma Gandhi and translated and published Gandhi's autobiography.

The second stage of Y T Wu's thinking developed between 1931-1940. He embraced *the Social Gospel*. In 1931 Japan occupied Manchuria. For Wu the principle of love became but a 'beautiful dream'. A series of articles by him were collected into a book *The Social Gospel* in 1934. He showed an interest in social revolution as the means to bring in social justice. In 1937 Wu went to the USA again to study at Union Theological Seminary for six months. There he was influenced by the theories of Henry Frederick Ward (1873-1966) the 'leftist prophet of labour' and Reinhold Niebuhr (1892-1971) the popular liberal theologian. His definite leanings toward Communism can be dated from this period.

The third stage of Y T Wu's thinking developed between 1941-1949. Wu became a Christian Socialist and a Marxist. In his treatise *No Man has Seen God*, he wrote, 'Belief in God is not contradictory to materialism, just as it is not contradictory to evolutionism. For what we know, the two seemingly contradictory systems of thought (atheism and theism) will achieve a new synthesis'. On 27 May 1943 Wu had an in-depth talk with Chou Enlai in Chungking (Chongqing) and became a secret member of the Party. In April 1948 Wu published his article *The Present-Day Tragedy of Christianity*. This was his declaration of war against foreign missions in China.

Wang Mingdao and the Three-Self Movement

Wang Mingdao had stood firm against the Japanese attempts to impose a political agenda on the Church. He would have to stand firm against the Communists for the same reason. He could not be involved with the TSM. Their muzzling of the freedom of the pulpit and their following a secular political agenda was a direct challenge to the only Headship of Christ in his Church. Another reason for not joining was its theological liberalism, which he regarded as a departure from the biblical gospel and heretical. Thus his reasons for not joining the TSM were theological, not political. Wang declared from the pulpit the biblical principle of separation of Church and State and that

a church which has become the servant of an atheist government had ceased to function as the true Church of Jesus Christ. Such criticism of the TSM by a Christian leader of national importance could not be tolerated. The problem was that if ever a man and his church had been consistently true to the principles of self-governance, self-support and self-propagation it was Wang Mingdao and the Tabernacle church in Beijing. Likewise his moral integrity and life were of the highest order.

In the spring of 1954 the TSM (now the Three-Self Patriotic Movement, TSPM) required all the churches and Christian organisations in Beijing to appoint delegates to attend a meeting in July at which Mr Wang Mingdao was to be publicly accused. Leslie Lyall says, 'At that meeting there was great excitement as many people raised their voices at the same time. Mr Wang, the accused, for his part, sat quietly on the platform, his eyes fixed on the ceiling, never uttering a word. Following the accusations, the chairman asked the delegates whether they recommended death or prison. But only a quarter of those present assented to either. The rest sat silent, some weeping, and no punishment was decreed.'

When Wang Mingdao resumed preaching it was to larger crowds than ever. Many conversions attended the best attended evangelistic meetings he had ever held. Such are the ways of God.

In May 1955 the TSPM made a last effort to win him over. This failed, so accusation meetings against him were ordered to take place all over China. The TSPM organ *Tianfeng* listed all the charges against him. Wang continued another two weeks' of evangelistic meetings in July and then went on a two weeks holiday with his wife to the seaside resort of Petaiho. On his return he published an issue of his magazine *The Spiritual Food Quarterly* and two important and typical pamphlets. The first pamphlet *Truth or Poison* was an analysis of the Communist claim that the teaching of missionaries was 'imperialist poison'. Wang demonstrated that the 'poisonous doctrines' complained of were actually the fundamental doctrines of Christianity in Scripture, the truth of God which must be believed and preached, and for which one must be willing to die. Wang was defending fundamental Christianity (Evangelicalism) and at the same time challenging the liberal theology of the TSPM leaders such as Y T Wu and K H Ting (Bishop Ding Guangxun). The second pamphlet *Loyalty to God without Respect of Persons* was a challenge to faithfulness to Christ.

Wang Mingdao's last sermon was on 7 August 1955. That night, after midnight, he and Mrs Wang were arrested at gunpoint, bound with ropes, and led to prison. He was sentenced to fifteen years' imprisonment. The Tabernacle was closed down and sealed.

In prison every effort was made to extract a confession of guilt. Wang Mingdao cracked under intense brain-washing and signed a confession. He was released from prison on 30 September 1956 and made to make a public recantation before a large meeting of TSPM delegates. As a result of all this, his conscience was in torment and his mind in turmoil. He was heard to mutter "I am Judas" or "I am Peter." He was delivered from this torment by the power of the Holy Spirit applying Micah 7:7-9 to his soul. Christ was his deliverer. His sin of betrayal had been covered by the Son of God who had died for his sins. The gospel truths were applied afresh to Wang's tortured heart and he found peace with God afresh. Wang had been a 'Peter' not a 'Judas'. Peter was a true-hearted servant of Christ who, in weakness, fell into sin. Judas was a false-hearted servant of Christ who apostatised. Peter was regenerate, Judas was unregenerate. Peter had been truly saved, Judas had never been saved. Peter repented, Judas only had remorse. Wang Mingdao would not change places with his enemies for anything. He prayed for them.

Wang Mingdao was re-arrested in April 1958 and had his sentence increased to life imprisonment. Mrs Wang Mingdao was released from prison in 1973, blind in one eye, as a result of mistreatment. Wang Mingdao was released from prison labour camp in January 1980, old, toothless, and nearly blind and deaf. He became involved in the house church movement in Beijing and wrote several books. Finally Mr and Mrs Wang Mingdao lived quietly at their son's home in Shanghai, until his death on 28 July 1991 followed by hers on 18 April 1992. They both had witnessed a good confession in their lives and had entered into their everlasting rest in their Saviour's presence.

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Moravians and Missionary Passion

The material is extracted from a paper by Bruce Jenkins presented at the Westminster Conference, London, December 2009.

The Moravian missionary enterprise was born on 21 August 1732 when Count Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf sent the potter Leonard Dober and the carpenter David Nitschmann to St Thomas Island in the West Indies. They went to preach to the slaves on the plantations, and were prepared, if necessary, to sell themselves into slavery to do the work.

It was truly pioneering. It was not only the birthday of Moravian missions, but the beginning of Protestant missions to the native peoples of foreign lands. It would be another 60 years before William Carey would start the Baptist Missionary Society. In 1792 Carey met with a small gathering in Kettering, threw down on the table copies of the English Moravian missionary magazine, the *Periodical Accounts*, and exclaimed: 'See what these Moravians have done! Can't we Baptists at least attempt something in fealty to the same Lord?'

A Moravian historian traced the advance of Moravian mission over these 60 years in these words:

What, then, had the Moravians done when William Carey issued his great challenge at Kettering? They had sent out more than 300 missionaries; they had established stations in the West Indies, in North America, in Surinam, in Greenland, and in Labrador; they had attempted to convert the Jews; they had sent expeditions to Lapland, Russia, Guinea, South Africa, Ceylon, Algiers, Constantinople, Wallachia, the Calmucks, Livonia, Persia, Egypt, Abyssinia, the Tartars, the Coromandel Coast, the Nicobar Islands, and Bengal; and now they had under their charge 14,976 baptized converts.

The vision was breathtaking. The fields of service read like the index of a world atlas.

The Moravians trace their spiritual lineage back to the Bohemian reformer and martyr, John Huss (1373-1415). They were established as an independent Episcopal Protestant church, the United Brethren (*Unitas Fratrum*) in 1457, half a century before the Protestant Reformation. The church was repeatedly in foreign exile during periods of persecution, until it was virtually destroyed during the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648). Remnants survived, and in 1722 Christian

David led a small number to take up the refuge offered by Zinzendorf (1700-1760) on his estate at Berthelsdorf in Saxony. They established a settlement called Herrnhut, 'the Lord's Watch', which attracted spiritual refugees from a variety of doctrinal backgrounds.

This community was torn by discord until a remarkable spiritual awakening, a 'Moravian Pentecost', occurred in 1727. They experienced a profound humbling, and an indescribable sense of the love and presence of Christ. It was from this renewed community, under the leadership of Zinzendorf, that the missionary movement sprang.

The Moravians were a neglected part of the Great Awakening, to which they are linked by the common experience of revival, by being directly instrumental in the conversion of John Wesley, so prominent a leader of the revival, and by their presence in England during the period of the awakening. Elements of Moravian doctrine and practice, however, placed them outside the mainstream of the Evangelical Awakening. As we shall see, they were like an awkward sibling, undeniably related but embarrassing to be seen with in public.

Why were the Moravians different from mainstream Evangelicalism? It soon becomes apparent that the Moravians, personified by

Zinzendorf, were above everything else a mixture, a set of inconsistencies and contradictions. They were orthodox in their essential evangelicalism, and yet in the language and practice of their piety broke the boundaries.

What about Moravian doctrine and practice? They are best described as 'non-confessional Lutheran Pietists'. Zinzendorf sought a language of experimental devotion rather than precise doctrine. The driving impulse of Zinzendorffian pietism was the intense desire to relate to God, to experience his presence, and to engage with him in vivid worship. The historic creeds and the formulas of systematic theology were regarded as true but of little help in achieving this experience.

In reflecting on this material we do well to observe that this disregard for teaching rendered the Moravians vulnerable. In most places the Moravians have declined to non-existence which is understandable since there are no doctrinal defence systems. (Inadequate doctrinal foundations also explain the catastrophic demise of Methodism in the UK). Worldwide there are 825,000 Moravians. The largest concentration is in Tanzania.

They placed little value on academic learning, and most of the missionaries were artisans. This approach was defended on the

grounds that such men were best able to endure the rough and pioneering life demanded of them. The missionaries were to mix with the natives, earn their esteem, and not lord it over them. They were to set an example of such exemplary conduct that would compel the natives to ask 'Who makes men such as these?' They should learn the local language in order to converse freely in it, translate important portions of Scripture, and teach reading and writing. They were to take local indigenous assistants called 'helpers' who would assist with visiting the sick, helping the poor, keeping the peace, and, if suitably gifted, teaching.

The whole church was involved in mission. The missionaries knew that they had the whole church wholeheartedly behind them. The Moravians are famous for having prayed continuously for over 100 years for the work of the church and its mission. The 'Hourly Intercession' began on 27 August 1727, 14 days after the initial awakening, and was undoubtedly the fruit of it. Twenty-four brothers and twenty-four sisters covenanted together to spend one hour each, day and night, in praying to God for his blessing on the congregation and its witness. This was a rotating assignment, divided by lot, of one man and one woman from the community praying every hour of the 24-hour day. The number of

participants soon increased, and this arrangement continued for over 100 years of non-stop prayer. The missionaries knew that there was not a moment without intercession for them and their work at the throne of grace.

Our doctrine may be better than that of the Moravians, but our praying for missionary work is worse. That is all the more inexcusable because our theology demands prayerfulness. Aren't we living with too large a gap between a theology that declares that salvation is of the Lord, and a prayerlessness that denies it? And if we are resistant to the over-regimentation of the 'Hourly Intercession', why have we not replaced it with something better?

This paper on the Moravians was one of six delivered in LONDON at the Westminster Conference, 8-9 Dec 2009. The other papers were, *John Calvin's agenda: Issues in the separation from Rome* Garry Williams, *Calvin as Commentator and Theologian* Don Carson, *Queen Elizabeth I and Calvin* Robert Oliver, 1859 - *A Year of Grace* Stephen Clark, *Darwin Before and After* Ken Brownell. These Westminster Conference Papers for 2009 can be obtained from Tentmaker Publications, 121 Hartshill Road, Hartshill, STOKE-on-TRENT ST4 7LU £5.95 including postage.

With Moravians in Tanzania

Stephen Nowak

Some time ago I met a student from Tanzania studying here in the UK. His name is Willey Mwasile. He is a member of the Moravian denomination. When he returned to Tanzania he was appointed principal of Utungule Bible College. He invited me to spend a couple of weeks teaching theology in the Mbeya region (South-West Province of Tanzania). He said he would arrange preaching meetings for me.

Tanzania has a population of about 45 million people. Depending on whom you are talking to, the number of Christians ranges from 50-70 percent. There have been no official statistics for many years. The country is very poor with the average wage being between one to two pounds a day. Pastors who are educated at secondary school and Bible college receive a piece of land to grow crops on, a house and about 20-25 pounds per month. Those who have been to university outside Tanzania can earn up to £80 a month if they fill positions such as chairman, vice chairman, general secretary or heads of other church departments. The Moravians have 168 churches in the Mbeya Province. 430,000 Moravian adherents is the statistic given by OPERATION WORLD for the whole of Tanzania.

After a 48-hour journey I could hardly believe the extent of the work planned to be done in 16 days. I was escorted to the main compound of the Moravian church in Mbeya province adjacent to the Zambian border. From this base I travelled to the Bible college and also was



Radio ministry in Tanzania

taken on two three-day trips to the churches in the Mbeya Province.

The Moravians have always been famous for personal piety, prayer and evangelism but have never been anything but Arminian in their theology (see article *Moravians and Missionary Passion*). I taught at the college on Pastoral Theology and the doctrines of grace. In the UK I had spent some time with Pastor Willey explaining the doctrines of grace to him. When I gave ten hours worth of lectures on these subjects he translated faithfully and seemed to be in total agreement with them. The students and other teaching staff listened attentively and asked all the usual questions. You could see the Lord opening their eyes as they looked to him for clarity and light. Many scriptures were opened up and discussed. At the end of many hours in the classroom all were convinced that this was the only way to see the work of salvation in a biblical and consistent way. It was a revelation and revolution in their understanding of the sovereignty of God, the state and condition of man in sin, God's eternal love for his people and the successful



Worn out Bibles in Tanzania

work of Christ in making an effectual atonement for his people. I affirmed that human responsibility and divine sovereignty run together and that the doctrines of grace inspire evangelism.

When taken to churches I found them packed to capacity with lively worshippers. Most church buildings are too small for the large size congregations. One place I preached at was Chulolumo. The last European to visit was in 1974. In a place called Nkanga over 250 packed into the church with another 100 or so listening outside. When I visited schools classes were suspended and staff and pupils came out to greet the visitor who was invited to preach for as long as he liked. Included in the itinerary was a visit to a Moravian hospital and orphanages. Also fitted in was preaching through a radio station called Radio Baraka which reaches out over a vast area.

I took 18 copies of the 1689 Baptist Confession for those who read English. There is an urgent need for literature in Swahili and this can be imported into Tanzania from Kenya.

My experience in Tanzania impressed me with our need for a spiritual awakening in Europe. We must give more time to

earnest intercession. Anointed well-prepared proclamation of the Word of God is essential, not entertainment. I noted the warmth of personal fellowship among the believers in Tanzania. Even after a four-hour service (translation doubles the preaching time) there is no rush to go home. These are poor people content with food and clothing, but zealous in appreciation of spiritual values which are opened up through expository preaching.

As opportunity affords I may be able to return in response to invitations from Tanzania. Like all pastors attempting to answer invitations one needs a contented wife, a supportive church and robust health.

There are so many needs in Tanzania. I observed ways in which we can help. The Utungule Bible College needs a new dormitory to house the increasing number of students. At the moment they live in very cramped conditions. With the African economy this will cost only about £2,500. The students have to provide their own food as the school hasn't got enough money to feed them. The students grow their own food and vegetables. The school needs a new minibus. The present vehicle is 20 years old and breaks down regularly. A second-hand vehicle in good condition from Japan will cost £5000.

If you would like to support this work in Tanzania cheques can be made out to Montpelier Place Baptist Church and posted to Pastor Stephen Nowak, 22 Windmill Close, Hove, East Sussex, BN3 7LJ. If you would like a presentation in your church or have any further questions please do not hesitate to contact me on 01273 772679 or at stephennowak@btinternet.com

Missionary Teamwork

Eric Wright

In Christian circles God has used a galaxy of spiritual innovators and adventurers to powerfully influence believers for good. I vividly recall the impact on my young life of biographies about Hudson Taylor, Jim Elliot and Jonathan Goforth.

When we turn to the Bible we seem to find the same pattern; a galaxy of great men and women – Abraham and Deborah, Moses and Joshua, Ruth and David, Peter and Paul. Hebrews eleven exhorts us to follow in their footsteps.

If individualism masks independence and downplays teamwork, however, it betrays the model left by the Master. While pastor I counselled and prayed with a number of young people desirous of serving God. One young man informed me that God had called him to serve as a foreign missionary in a pioneer setting. Subsequent conversations revealed that he saw no need to take missionary training nor be married. He felt that informing church leaders about what he had already decided to do was enough! Fortunately, he mellowed. Subsequently he accepted advice in both areas.

Another, a young woman, informed our church board of her intention to serve in a para-church organisation. Her letter made it clear that she was not asking for input on her calling but for financial support.

Without preliminary consultation a missionary agency once sent us application papers for a young man planning to engage in summer missionary work abroad. We were taken aback that the young man had not asked his own church for prayer and input during the decision-making process.

My experience is too common. The church I pastored during that period encouraged young people to seriously consider the Great Commission. Our policy paper clearly laid out the importance of church involvement in each step of a prospective missionary's preparation. But in spite of all our efforts, the main impression we were given by prospective Christian workers seemed to be, 'Where I should serve Christ is a personal and private matter.'

This article is extracted from the book *A Practical Theology of Missions* by Eric Wright which was the subject of a book notice in the last issue of RT. Day One, 2010, 380 pages paperback, £12.00.

His book is divided into eight parts: 1. The Biblical Basis of Missions, 2. The Missionary Task, 3. The Missionary Message, 4. The Missionary, 5. Missionary Teamwork, 6. The Missionary and Culture, 7. Missionary Strategy, 8. Missionary Work Proper.

Through this abridged extract from chapter five readers will be able to assess the style and worth of this book which is commended for its relevance, clarity and practical character.

The independent spirit is alien to apostolic practice. From the very first chapter of Acts we find Christians meeting together. They made decisions corporately. Peter stood up in a gathering of about 120 believers to suggest that they choose another apostle to replace Judas (See Acts 1).

The fire of Pentecost fell when ‘they were all together in one place’ (2:1). Although Peter took the lead in interpreting this amazing manifestation of the Spirit, he did so while ‘taking his stand with the eleven (2:14). Obviously, the others were in agreement.

The complaint (in Acts 6) over the neglect of Hellenistic widows in the daily distribution of food led to congregational deliberation. ‘The twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples,’ and explained the importance of maintaining their own ministry in the Word and prayer, and then said, Choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom – we will turn this responsibility over to them’ (6:2-3).

From the Church’s infancy the apostles involved the whole congregation in decision making. In Acts 6 we read that the apostolic suggestion about choosing men to help with distribution, ‘found approval with the whole congregation; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip’ (6:5). Obviously the apostles trusted the whole congregation to exercise wisdom in the choice of seven men. They were not disappointed.

In Acts 13 we find the Holy Spirit communicating his missionary vision to a group of five church leaders. Out of the group of five the Spirit set apart

Barnabas and Saul. These first missionaries were sent out under the guidance of a group.

Consider the role of teamwork in apostolic witness in the sending out of missionaries two by two. ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them’ (13:2). Barnabas and Saul constituted a team during their first missionary journey. When they prepared to leave on their second journey Paul refused to take John Mark. Paul and Barnabas parted company. But instead of going off singly on their separate journeys, both maintained the team principle by choosing another companion. ‘Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus. But Paul chose Silas and departed’ (15:39,40).

Jesus stressed teamwork. He ‘appointed twelve, that they might be with him, and that he might send them out to preach’ (Mark 3:14). When he sent them out to preach and heal, he sent them out ‘two by two’ (Luke 10:1). Even in his most glorious and grievous experiences—when transfigured on the mountain and sorrowing in the garden—he took disciples with him.

Acts is replete with stories of missionary teamwork. ‘Judas (called Barsabas), and Silas, leading men among the brothers’, were sent by the church from Jerusalem to Antioch (15:22). Paul added Timothy to his team in Lystra (16:1-3). Aquila and Priscilla greatly aided Paul’s ministry at various times (18:2,18,26).

George Murray writes: ‘The book of Acts reveals 17 different missionary teams that worked with Paul. In his New Testament letters Paul identifies 34 individuals as team workers with him in the preaching of the gospel.’

Individual decisions and actions are necessary at times. The importance of teamwork does not mean we should suspend individual initiative.

When persecution fell on the Jerusalem Church after Stephen’s martyrdom, ‘those who had been scattered went about preaching the word. And Philip went down to the city of Samaria and began proclaiming Christ to them’ (8:4,5). Philip was probably alone in Samaria. He faced a dilemma. Up to this point evangelism had been restricted to the Jewish community. He must have wondered about the validity of witnessing to non-Jewish Samaritans. But he made an individual decision and embraced a Samaritan evangelistic mission with powerful results (8:6).

Reports of the astounding response of Samaritans to Philip's preaching led the apostles to send Peter and John (8:14) to check out Philip's ministry. When they arrived in Samaria, God used Peter and John as the channels through whom he poured out the Spirit on the Samaritans. Obviously, Peter and John quickly recognized the genuine nature of Philip's work. Individual efforts and ministries do need the evaluation and supervision of a larger group.

Not long after Peter, alone, received the vision which taught him about the importance of Gentile evangelism. While waiting for food to be prepared, Peter prayed on the roof of his host's home in Joppa. There he received a vision of unclean creatures which God encouraged him to kill and eat. Immediately after the vision he was invited to preach in Cornelius' household with powerful effect. Peter interpreted this event to mean that, 'God is not one to show partiality' (10: 34). Against all accepted practice up to this point, Peter 'ordered them to be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ' (10:48).

Jewish converts, however, soon called Peter to account for his actions. Upon arrival in Jerusalem, 'those who were circumcised took issue with Peter' (11:2). Much of Acts 11 describes Peter's defence of his actions. At the end of his defence we read, 'When they heard this, they quietened down, and glorified God, saying "Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life." ' (11:18). In spite of Peter's stature among the twelve he willingly submitted to group evaluation of his actions.

Apostolic precedent demonstrates that individual actions and controversial decisions are always subject to group scrutiny. Paul called Peter to account in Antioch (Gal 2:11-21). Lay Christians, Priscilla and Aquila, took Apollos, the eloquent preacher from Alexandria, aside 'and explained to him the way of God more accurately' (18:26). Preachers, evangelists and missionaries can never rise to a position where they are not accountable to other believers.

We consider now the role of families in evangelistic and missionary outreach. If you are wondering what a discussion of the role of the family has to do with evangelism and missions, please bear with me. These issues are important. Historically some Christians have sought to exalt singleness and celibacy. A few have argued that missionaries ought to have no children, or small families. Let's look at some of the biblical data.

The list of qualifications laid down for elders and deacons assumes that marriage and children are the norm. ‘An overseer, then, must be . . . the husband of one wife, . . . one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity Let deacons be husbands of only one wife, and good managers of their children and their own households’ (1 Tim 3:2,4,8; see also Titus 1:6).

Peter and the other apostles, with the exception of Paul, were married. So was Philip (1 Cor 9:5).

God ordained that the marital union illustrate the relationship Christ bears to the church. ‘Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave himself up for her’ (Eph 5:22-33). In the light of its crucial significance in divine imagery marriage and the family must never be considered a hindrance or economic burden. Indeed, the Christian family is one of the most important missionary (evangelistic) units conceivable. Its importance far outweighs that of any kind of organisation or parachurch group, outside of the Church itself.

The relationship between a husband and his wife and between Christian parents and children ought to illustrate gospel interaction. God designed the Christian family to demonstrate to a sceptical world love and forgiveness, humility and obedience, discipline and patience—all in the context of relational give and take.

The way men or women serve in world missions and in church life ought to reflect the positive way they apply biblical principles in family life. Good families make good Christians, gentle pastors, thoughtful deacons, wise evangelists, and able missionaries. Good families create team players.

God designed the home to be a womb where we develop the qualities necessary in mature adults, including a propensity to favour co-operation over competition. Even Jesus ‘grew in grace and in favour with God and man’ in the context of his home. God gave to Mary and Joseph a crucial role in the human development of his son. Given this divine model, any organisation that fails to give to the family its rightful place fails to incarnate the gospel.

Sadly, I have frequently witnessed in Canada and in Pakistan the fallout of those who failed to give family life its rightful place. Workaholic deacons and

pastors often have children who grow up unable to get along with their own spouses or hold normal jobs.

When we fail in the home, we necessarily stumble in the church and in its worldwide mission. But when families do their job, they nurture servants who understand the value of teamwork.

But what about singleness? Some men and women, under divine guidance, have chosen the path of singleness in order to further the gospel.

In I Corinthians Paul argues that in view of ‘the present distress’, it is good for a man to remain as he is. Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be released. Are you released from a wife? Do not seek a wife’ (1 Cor 7:26,27). He argues that if one is able to control his desires he may remain unmarried, for he will be more ‘concerned about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord; but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how he may please his wife’ (1 Cor 7:32,33). The Roman Church has used this passage to sanction a system of unmarried priests. They assumed that singleness would always enhance priestly ministry. How terribly short-sighted!

Paul himself carried on a powerful ministry as an unmarried man. There have been many like him. Christ seems to teach that in some cases, for example – Paul, individuals may purposely renounce marriage for the sake of the kingdom (Matt 19:11,12). Singleness remains a viable, but rare option.

Examples of apostolic marriage clearly indicates that God wills marriage for most who serve him. (1 Cor 9:5) Singleness is an exception to a general rule.

Any attempt to evangelise a given culture has to consider the value that culture places on marriage and children. Pakistani society, in common with most of the world’s cultures, exalts marriage and the family. It views single missionaries with curiosity, if not outright suspicion. Only divinely appointed singles can hope to overcome this prejudice.

Children open many hearts to evangelistic opportunities. People universally love children. May God deliver preachers, missionaries and evangelists from the terrible thought that their wife and children are in the way of their ministry! Nothing could be further from the truth. As long as Christian parents demonstrate a balanced devotion to both Christ and their family, their ministry will be blessed.

News



Liberia

Alan Levy featured above in the group photo enjoyed safe travel and good health when he ministered in Liberia during February for the first PTI conferences in that country. David Sercombe was to have accompanied Alan but was unable to travel at the last minute due to a medical condition. One man alone for such a difficult country was a concern but we are grateful for the success of this mission. Alan expounded the letter of Paul to Titus and used David Sercombe's outlines on the Bible Story Line. The latter pleased the company so well that they applauded!

India

Every year pastor Stephen Turner of New Zealand ministers in South India. He is shortly to commence his 17th trip

this time to Coonor in the Nilgiri Hills, Tamil Nadu. Last year he was accompanied by three others. 36 attended the seminar. Stephen anticipates 50 students this time. He writes:

'God willing, I will leave on Tuesday May 18 for South India and the 17th Studies at Coonor in the Nilgiri Hills, Tamil Nadu. As yet no one has come forward to join me on this trip. However, there is yet time for someone to make that decision. It is always great to have another younger man with me. The Studies are slightly longer than usual and will commence on Friday May 21 and conclude on Saturday May 29 after breakfast.

The two books which we plan to use as the basis for the discussions are John Stott's *The Cross of Christ* and Gordon Fee's *Paul, the Spirit and the People of*

God'. The Studies will generally follow the same format with our meeting at 7:00am for some preaching from me from Luke. Then we will have four sessions before dinner of about one and a half hours each on the two books above. Then after dinner we will meet for an open discussion on aspects of Christian living.'

China

The Lord gave me a good month in Shanghai with numerous teaching and preaching opportunities. The door is wide open to teach in a young reformed network of churches which use the Heidelberg Catechism. I gave the leader, Joshua, your book on the Puritans. A lawyer friend told me that young people all over the city are asking about Christianity and that Bible study groups are springing up in many office buildings. The weeks at the seminary were wonderful and the deep hunger for the Word among the students is so refreshing. One church changed its meeting time so I could come and preach to them Young leaders are crying out for more training to be able to better serve the Lord. The needs are great! *Ray Martin of Allentown Pa.*

Myanmar and Thailand

Ken Brownell, pastor of the East London Tabernacle, returned to Myanmar (Burma) in late January. In Yangon he led a conference on expository preaching, which was well received by the 60 attendees. The teaching and the workshops were based on the epistle of James. Ken had further

meetings at training centres in Yangon, and with pastors in Mandalay. After this Ken flew to Thailand and met with Christians working in training and church planting in the 'Golden Triangle' border areas of Burma, Laos and Thailand. The highlight was a meeting with an evangelist going into Laos (a largely unevangelised country with a government resistant to Christianity) who is keen to develop training for Laotian Christians.

Zimbabwe

An African Pastors' Conference has just taken place in Bulawayo Zimbabwe April 6th-7th. The adverse conditions in Zimbabwe are well known. To these were added torrential rain and the breakdown of transport, reducing the number attending to 71. Food was reduced to biscuits and tea. The organisation was highly efficient and the venue of City Presbyterian Church was ideal and graciously given free of charge.

A large number of books (six for every pastor) was stopped at the border and an exorbitant amount of money demanded. That was not possible. Subsequently we have been working to overcome this barrier.

In spite of many problems besetting this conference the tone was excellent. The pastors, the organisers and the speakers were deeply grateful for all who prayed and gave financially so that this conference could take place. *Irving Steggles*

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