

# REFORMATION TODAY



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**Websites** [www.reformation-today.org](http://www.reformation-today.org)

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

<http://africanpastorsconference.com>



*Members of this year's Administrative Council are, in front from left, Steve marquedant, Donny Martin, Jon Hueni and Ron Baines. In second row, from left, are Coordinator Gordon Taylor, Fred Malone, Larry Vincent, John Giarrizzo and David Campbell. In rear, from left, are Bob Selph, Peter Van Dorn, Hank Rast and Fred Pugh. See News.*

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*Front cover picture – The Victory was the flagship of the English fleet in the famous battle of Trafalgar. The British admiral Horatio Nelson (1758-1805) led the way and suffered the brunt of the closely fought battle. A sniper in the masts of an adjacent French ship mortally wounded Nelson. The Victory was towed into Gibraltar her masts and sails shot to pieces. The casualties were high, as might be expected in such a close fought action. The British lost 449 men killed and 1241 wounded (some of whom subsequently died), the French and Spanish fleets lost 4408 men killed and 2545 wounded, (figures are from Lewis 'A Social History of the Navy'). The ultimate outcome of this victory was to secure the supremacy of the British navy on the high seas for the next hundred years. It ended the threat of invasion from France. The dominion exercised by Napoleon would have been far more extensive (see article Napoleon – friend of foe) were it not for the victory of the English fleet in the battle of Trafalgar. Tourists enjoy visiting Portsmouth Harbour to view The Victory.*

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## Editorial

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### *Praying for the nations*

The predictions made that the Messiah will enjoy an ever-increasing kingdom encourages prayer. It is no small privilege that we who are so finite and so microscopic are invited to pray big prayers which honour the omnipotence of our God.

‘Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession’ (Ps 2:8). This invitation is made to our victorious Redeemer. That success will eventually be seen is assured as Psalm 67 declares: ‘God will bless us and all the ends of the earth will fear him’ (Ps 67:7), and ‘All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations will bow down before him, for dominion belongs to the LORD and he rules over the nations’ (Ps 22:27). ‘His rule will extend from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth’ (Zech 9:10). Daniel was in exile at a time when the situation for believers was bleak but from Daniel we have these words: ‘In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure for ever’ (Dan 2:44). Isaiah 11 and Micah 4 can be added to these and many other promises.<sup>1</sup> Perseverance is encouraged for those watchmen whom the Lord places on the walls of Jerusalem: ‘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).

Our prayers are meaningful when they are not general but specific because we are informed about detail. For instance praying for Iran means more when we study the facts. Iran with a population of about 72 million has a history which stretches back over 2,500 years. It was in 1979 that 25 centuries of monarchy came to an end with the institution of the

revolutionary Islamic regime which relentlessly opposes Christianity. Bibles are banned, evangelism is illegal and male converts face the death penalty. Thirty years of Islamic rule have caused most Iranians to be open to the gospel. This is noted both within Iran and among the four million who have emigrated to escape oppression and who live in a world-wide diaspora. Why this openness? It is the result of cruelty and injustice. Eight foremost Christian leaders have been martyred. There is no recourse or accountability for these wicked murders. Corruption is unchecked. Christians are discriminated against. Women are legally devalued. When women suffer the Islamic regime offers no justice and no protection. Little wonder that there is disillusionment. The people are tired of being told what to wear, watch or read. Many turn to drugs so that there is an acute addiction problem in Iranian society. Military service for 18 months is mandatory for all able-bodied males. Women are exempt. Christian meetings take place in homes. Care has to be taken to avoid persecution. Infiltrators are on the prowl and discernment is needed to detect them. About 200,000 mullahs work in over 50,000 mosques. When mullahs turn to Christ, and some do, they face enormous dangers and difficulties.

Notable is the fact that the New Testament is the most effective tool in evangelism. These are always in short supply. It is estimated that there are about 23 million Iranians who use the Internet. Some excellent gospel materials are available. (see [www.iran30.org](http://www.iran30.org))<sup>2</sup>

#### *Priority in our intercession*

Wilhelmus à Brakel (1635-1711) is the Dutch equivalent of John Owen the Prince of the Puritans (see Book Reviews). Wilhelmus à Brakel concludes his treatise *The New Testament Church from the birth of Christ to the end* with an emphasis on the need to pray for and reach out to the Jews. About one third of the Jewish population were murdered by the Nazis in the holocaust. Today they are found in most countries but especially the USA (6,300,000), Israel (6,000,000), France (600,000), Russia (550,000), Ukraine (400,000), Canada (360,000) the UK (300,000), Argentina (250,000), Brazil (130,000), South Africa (106,000) and Australia (100,000).<sup>3</sup>



OPERATION WORLD<sup>4</sup> describes 270 nations and draws attention in particular to the 10/40 Window (see page 17). The 10/40 Window extends from West Africa to East Asia, from ten degrees north to forty degrees north of the equator. This specific region contains three of the world's dominant religious bodies. The majority of those enslaved by Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism live within the 10/40 Window - billions of spiritually impoverished souls. It is home to the majority of the world's unevangelised people.

While the 10/40 Window constitutes only one-third of earth's total land area, nearly two-thirds of the world's people reside in the 10/40 Window, with a total population nearing four billion. Of the world's 50 least evangelised countries, 37 are within the 10/40 Window. Yet those 37 countries comprise 95% of the total population of the 50 least evangelised countries!

Of the poorest of the poor, more than eight out of ten live in the 10/40 Window. On average they exist on less than \$500 per person per year. Although 2.4 billion of these people live within the 10/40 Window, only 8% of all missionaries work among them.

The last two paragraphs are cited from Desiring God Website where John Piper exhorts as follows: 'So don't shrink back from praying huge, sweeping prayers. For example, "With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit - for all the saints." (Eph 6:18). Think of it! What an incredible breadth and generality. ALL the saints! Do you do that? I admit I do not do it often enough. My heart is too small. But I am trying to get my heart around it. The Bible commands it.'

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew Henry's commentary on these passages is highly commended.

<sup>2</sup> Elam Ministries provide an excellent 45 page prayer guide for Iran written by David Yeghnazar and Simon Taylor. With colour photos throughout, this 45 page booklet is available from ELAM, The Quinta, Weston Rhyn, Oswestry, Shropshire, SY10 7LT .

<sup>3</sup> Martin Gilbert, *Atlas of Jewish History*, Routledge, 6th edition, 2003.

<sup>4</sup> The last edition of OPERATION WORLD was published by Paternoster Press in 2001. The next edition, the seventh, is due this year.

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## Consider Christ in Affliction

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Joel Beeke

I am writing to you personally about affliction. Much has been written on affliction by our forebears. A good part of it you have known for a long time. For example, you know that all affliction is ultimately traceable to our tragic fall in Adam. You know, too, the grievousness of affliction. After all, who enjoys suffering?

Yet you also know that all affliction is sent by a wise, fatherly God. Perhaps you even know – as the whole book of Job and the Puritans never tire of teaching us – that the important thing is not the amount of affliction we receive, but how we *respond* to that affliction.

Isn't it just here that your deepest questions about affliction and trial lie? For you want to respond to affliction in a God-glorifying manner, but you feel you often fall inexcusably short. You desire that your entire life may serve God's praise (Isa 43:21), but somehow when you enter the heat and heart of affliction you find yourself losing your grip on your firm intention. To respond rightly to affliction *before* it comes is hard; to look back on it gratefully *after* it is over is harder; but to live Christianly *in* affliction is hardest. Hence you ask yourself again and again: *How may I live through affliction more Christianly – in a way that is more like Christ?* How may I grow in grace while – yes, *while* – suffering affliction?

You are not alone in such wrestlings. Countless times God's children have been there, begging to be made conformable to the image of Christ through the furnace of affliction. The prayer is simple ('Lord, grant me grace to live through *this* affliction *Christianly*'); the wrestlings, often agonizing.

Through years of *encountering* affliction (including times of running from, wrestling with, resolving against, and – by grace – submitting to and bowing under it), I have gleaned a few thoughts on how to live *Christianly* through affliction. These I wish to share with you. But as you allow me to provide several practical hints on this eminently practical subject, please bear in mind that we are always dependent on the sanctification of the Holy Spirit at every juncture for real spiritual benefit under affliction. Without the Spirit's gracious influences, affliction may readily lead us away from rather than toward God.

I wish to focus my suggestions to you around one major theme that, sad to say, took me many years to learn even in small measure: The most effective means for living Christianly in affliction is to consider Christ, the fountainhead of all vital Christianity (Heb 3:1). To live Christianly in any sphere or aspect of life necessitates Spirit-worked faith to look to him, to feast on him, to depend on him – yes, to find both our life in him (on Calvary’s cross) and our death in him (as exalted Lord, to whom we belong).

*Consider Christ* – that’s the crux of the whole matter of affliction. But *how*, you ask? In what ways must I consider him? In these seven ways:

### **The passion of Christ**

First and foremost, consider the *passion of Christ*. What greater source of strength for living *through* and profiting from affliction can be had than frequent meditation on the sufferings of the Lord Jesus? Think much on these things: If Jesus suffered so much on behalf of his people, shouldn’t I be able to endure in his strength the daily afflictions I must bear? What are my afflictions compared to his? Besides, was he not the Sufferer *par excellence* while *wholly innocent*, and am I not, at best, a sufferer in his footsteps while *wholly guilty*?

Moreover (and this may be most encouraging), *is there one affliction that I must endure that he has not already endured?* Is he not the Breaker to go before his flock both in opening all our paths (Mic 2:13) and in being tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin (Heb 4:15)? *All* paths, *all* points. Jesus not only knows your affliction, he has identified *himself* with it. He has *borne* it. And he will *sanctify* it. ‘There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it’ (1 Cor 10:13).

### **The power of Christ**

Second, consider the *power of Christ*. Being infinite God-man, Jesus received power *on earth* to bear infinite sufferings on your behalf. And through the merit of these sufferings, he now receives royal power *in heaven* from his Father to rule and strengthen you in your sufferings (Matt 28:18). Translated practically relative to affliction, his heaven-earth power reads like this: If he desires to weigh you down with affliction – yes, heavy, seemingly staggering affliction – do not be alarmed, but look to him for strength.

Nor should you be ashamed. When I worked for my father in early youth, I was advised to carry only half-bundles of shingles up the ladder to the roof, but I anticipated the day of greater maturity and strength when my shoulders could bear full, unsplit bundles as my older brothers could. Similarly, afflicted believer, Jesus Christ tailors your afflictions to you. He has promised to fit your afflictions to your shoulders (1 Cor 10:13). Neither be proud of slender shoulders nor ask for more affliction, but beg for broader shoulders exercised in the weight-room of Jesus' providential leadings.

As you and I realise by grace that the bearing of heavy burdens Christianly is testimony to spiritual maturity and honours the Christ whom we love, our groaning under affliction's 'heaviness' will be happily borne. Isn't this the encouragement that Puritan George Downname intended to convey when he aptly penned: 'The Lord does not measure out our afflictions according to our faults, but according to our strength, and looks not at what we have deserved, but at what we are able to bear'?

Oh, how great it is when we may look to the strength of Jesus Christ in all our weakness and apprehend our strength in him (2 Cor 12:9)! Then the power of the humiliated and exalted Jesus enables us to sing at times (would to God more heartily and frequently!) in 'inner prison' depths with Paul and Silas (Acts 16:25) – yes, to rejoice that we are counted worthy to suffer for the name and sake of the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. 2 Cor 6 and 12).

### **The presence of Christ**

Third, consider the *presence of Christ*. He is at no time absent from you, even when your faith lacks active exercise to grasp him. Even in your hours of thickest Egyptian darkness, he is close beside you. Only of him can it be declared, 'The darkness and the light are both alike to thee' (Ps 139:12).

How comforting this is! In all your dark afflictions your High Priest retains you in his high-priestly eye, preserves you in his high-priestly heart, bears you on his high-priestly shoulders, removes you not from the engravings on his high-priestly hands, and never ceases to remember you in his high-priestly intercessions. 'He ever liveth to make intercession for them' (Heb 7:25).

Oh, what tender love! You are never forgotten by Jesus Christ, despite your negligence toward him. Your unbrotherliness to Christ never unbrothers this precious Elder Brother from you. From his perspective he ever remains a friend that sticks 'closer than a brother' (Prov 18:24), even when you cannot



see or feel it. Even then he is whispering to you in midnight seasons, 'What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter' (John 13:7).

Take heart. The Jesus who never failed you in *yesterday's* afflictions (did he not rather give you extra tokens of his care?) is still present to give you *today's* strength (Matt 6:34). Just as waves are cut down to melodious whimpers at shore's reality, so he will break down your waves of *tomorrow's* impossibilities *as* (not *before!*) they break in on the beachheads of your life. Wait on your *ever-present* Saviour. He will not let you down. He is the same yesterday, today, and for ever (Heb 13:8).

### **The patience and perseverance of Christ**

Fourth, consider the *patience and perseverance of Christ*. As you know, the form of 'Chinese torture' that drips one drop of water at regular intervals on the forehead of a prisoner strapped beneath a faucet gets all its power from the duration of the trial, not from the first one or two hundred drops. Insanity is usually the end result.

And so matters might end with you, *were it not for Jesus*. I know very well that what makes affliction so severe for you is its duration. You often wonder if there will ever be an end and, if so, how you will hang on to the end.

But it is Christ who provides you the strength to bear one more drop, take one more step, live one more day, in the severest of tortures and persecutions. He has earned that provision by enduring his sufferings to their end. Gethsemane, Gabbatha, Golgotha – in each place he confirmed: 'Jesus ... having loved his own ... he loved them unto *the end*' (John 13:1). Blood drop by blood drop, for six long hours he poured out his life. And never flinched. Never answered his mockers a word. Never yielded to their taunts: '*If thou be the Christ ...*'

It's through Jesus' strength that you too have endured. Look back at the heaviest of your afflictions. How did you bear them through those long nights, months and years? How did you retain your silence when persecuted? How did you continue on when many challenged, '*If you are a Christian ...*'?

Must you not say: *Only through the perseverance of Christ have I by grace persevered?* Oh, the depth of Paul's confession: 'By the *grace of God*, I am what I am' (1 Cor 15:10a)!

Through sixteen long years of persecution from Saul David persevered. You too will persevere. Jesus has done too much, persevered too long (he is still

persevering in intercession!) to let you slip through his fingers. ‘I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand’ (John 10:28).

Look more to Christ. Trust more in his promise. Rest more in his perseverance, for your perseverance rests in his. Seek grace to imitate his patience under affliction. Your trials may alarm you, but they will not destroy you. Your crosses are God’s way to royal crowning (Rev 7:14).

### **The prayers of Christ**

Fifth, consider the *prayers of Christ*. How often he set time apart on earth to pray to his Father, especially in hours of need! How continually he prays in heaven for all his Church! How effectual all his prayers are!

You, too, ought to make more use of prayer, especially in combating spiritual depression under afflictions. Bring all your needs steadily to your praying High Priest. Be assured he hears your every whisper.

And when you grow drowsy or sloppy in prayer, pray aloud. Or write down your prayers. Or find a quiet place to walk in the fresh air to pray. Whatever happens don’t stop praying. ‘Pray without ceasing’ (1 Thess 5:17). Conversation with God through Christ is the antidote that wards off spiritual depression in the thick of affliction.

A *prayerless* affliction is like an open sore, ripe for infection; a *prayerful* affliction is like an open sore, ripe for the balm of Gilead – the healing ointment of Jesus’ blood.

### **The purposes of Christ**

Sixth, consider the *purposes of Christ*. He lived to do his Father’s will, to be sanctified through suffering, to merit salvation for his own, to present his Church without spot or wrinkle to his Father. In a word, his life was God-centred.

His God-centred goals are numerous for you, too, in sanctified affliction: Sanctified affliction *humbles* you (Deut 8:2), teaches you what *sin is* (Zeph 1:12), and causes you to *seek God* (Hos 5:15). Affliction vacuums away the fuel that feeds your pride. Bell-like, the harder you are hit, the better you sound. You learn more under the rod that strikes you than through the staff that

comforts you. You discover the truth of Robert Leighton's words: 'Affliction is the diamond dust that heaven polishes its jewels with.'

Sanctified affliction serves to keep you *in Christ's communion, close by his side – to conform you to him, making you partaker of his suffering and image, righteousness and holiness* (Heb 12:10–11). Stephen-like, the stones that hit you only knock you closer to your chief cornerstone, Jesus Christ, opening heaven the wider for you. Affliction rubs the rust off your locked heart and opens your heart's gates afresh to your King's presence-chamber. Yes, the rod of affliction is God's pencil for drawing Christ's image more fully on you.

Sanctified affliction serves to wean you from the world and to *cause you to walk by faith*. A dog bites strangers, not homeowners. Perhaps affliction bites you so deeply because you are too little at home with the Word and ways of God, and too much at home with the world. 'God,' says Thomas Watson, 'would have the world hang as a loose tooth which, being twitched away, does not much trouble us.' In *prosperity*, you often *talk* of living by other-worldly faith, but in *adversity*, you *live* your talk.

### **The plan of Christ**

Finally, consider the *plan of Christ*. Highly exalted, there is no name like his. At his name, every knee shall bow (Phil 2:10). The eternal plan lying behind all his affliction was eternal glory.

Eternal glory – not only for himself, but also for you. He returned to his Father differently from when he came. He returned having bought his bride, just as he planned in his eternal covenant with his Father. His Church, figuratively speaking, ascended into glory with him, accepted by the Father in the Beloved (Eph 1:6). Oh, then think more of God's eternal plan for you and your eternal end in glory if you would be more submissive under affliction and learn to praise God in trial!

Your trials in this life are but for '*ten days*'. Your life-to-come glory is *for ever*. The '*ten days*' here are preparation time for glory to come. Affliction elevates your soul to heaven (Heb 11:10); it paves your way for glory: 'For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory' (2 Cor 4:17).

Your rainy days on earth are nearly over. Don't overestimate them. Think more of your coming crown and your eternal communion with God Triune,

saints and angels. ‘He that rides to be crowned,’ John Trapp wrote, ‘will not think much of a rainy day.’

*Light after darkness;  
Gain after loss;  
Strength after weakness;  
Crown after cross;  
Sweet after bitter;  
Hope after fears;  
Home after wandering;  
Praise after tears.*

*Sheaves after sowing;  
Sun after rain;  
Sight after mystery;  
Peace after pain;  
Joy after sorrow;  
Calm after blast;  
Rest after weariness;  
Sweet rest at last.*

Remember, you are but renting *here*; your personal mansion is reserved *there*. Expect no heaven on earth (apart from spiritual foretastes by means of sanctified affliction!), but trust that ‘eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him’ (1 Cor 2:9).

Be assured: *the Shepherd’s rod does have honey at the end*. Don’t despair. Your afflictions are imposed by a *fatherly* hand of *love* in the context of *grace*, not (as you are too prone to think) by a *punitive* hand of *judgment* in the context of *works*.

### **Keep your eye on Christ**

Consider Christ – his passion, power, presence, perseverance, prayers, purposes and plan. Seek grace to live *Christianly today* through and in your afflictions, and you will soon discover with the apostle, ‘For to me to live is *Christ*, and to die is gain’ (Phil 1:21).

‘Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD’ (Ps 27:14).

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## Napoleon – friend or foe?

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### PART 1



### The Decay and Influence of Catholicism in Nineteenth-Century France

*Frederick Hodgson*

*Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821)*

Towards the close of the eighteenth century France had descended into chaos and extreme violence. The French Revolution erupted as a reaction to the oppressive forces that bore down upon the nation from the monarchy and the Church. These forces had been growing throughout the seventeenth century and reached their ultimate strength during the reign of Louis XIV (1643-1715). They were then challenged by rationalistic philosophies on the one hand and on the other by the brave, faithful preaching of men like Claude Brousson, Antoine Court and Paul Rabaut as described in the article *The Church in the Wilderness* found in RT232. Sadly this revitalised Reformed French Church did not remain faithful to its biblical reformed creed and it fell to 'Enlightenment' ideas and lost its strength.

The storm that fell on the French monarchy and the aristocracy is well known. The infamous use of the guillotine became synonymous with the French Revolution. Less well known is its use against the priests. Sadistic men like



Jean-Baptiste Carrier used the guillotine and indescribable forms of torture and execution against priests and other counter-revolutionaries that cannot be printed in this magazine.

In 1789 the State cancelled the power of the Church to tax the people. It was announced that all Church property belonged to the nation and in 1790 the clergy were made employees of the State. They were obliged to swear an oath of fidelity to the State or face dismissal, deportation or death. The priests awaited the approval of Pope Pius VI and after eight months he denounced the French Constitution, resulting in a split among the clergy. Some obeyed the Pope and these priests were called 'non-jurors' and others accepted the terms of the State. The problems for the Catholic Church were made worse in 1792 when the National Assembly legalised divorce and took control of the birth, marriage and death registers away from the Church. The Church was viewed as being against the Revolution and during the September massacres of that year three bishops and more than two hundred priests met their deaths at the hands of angry mobs. Under the orders of revolutionary leaders like Joseph Fouché and Collot d'Herbois there were mass executions of priests and nuns in Lyons. Hundreds of priests were imprisoned and suffered abominably in the port of Rochefort.

Anti-church activity reached its climax in 1794 after Sunday observance had been abolished and street and town names containing references to Christianity had been changed. Although some return to religious tolerance took place in 1795 when public worship was legalised, priests were still being imprisoned and deported to penal colonies in 1799. In this year the French army captured Rome and Pope Pius VI was imprisoned in Valence and died the following year in captivity.

It has been estimated that between twenty and forty thousand people perished during this violent period and that six percent of these victims were members of the clergy. Non-jurors in particular were either executed or deported to French Guiana. Under threat of death, imprisonment, conscription and loss of income about twenty thousand priests were forced to abdicate. Although some priests remained to minister covertly to the people, by the end of the century approximately thirty thousand priests had been forced to leave France. Most parishes were without priests.

## *Napoleon's New Order after Revolutionary Chaos*

By any reckoning Napoleon's appearance on the world stage had massive and widespread consequences. His dominating influence in European politics was immense. In many ways his almost unbroken reign as Emperor of France from December 1804 to June 1815 was a watershed in the history of the Church in its broadest sense. Even before he was made Emperor, his influence was felt on ecclesiastical structures. This amazing soldier was elected as First Consul in 1799, making him officially the most powerful person in France.

In 1801 he negotiated a Concordat with the Pope for political reasons. Although the agreement struck acknowledged that Roman Catholicism was 'the religion of the great majority of Frenchmen' and subsidies were granted to this Church, Napoleon acknowledged other denominations. During the revolutionary war Alsace in the north-east had been annexed to France. Lutheranism was dominant here and in 1802 the Lutheran Church was recognised by the State. Furthermore the Reformed Church was given permission to have 'consistorial churches' of up to six thousand people, each with a group of ministers and laymen, although there was disappointment that it was not allowed to exercise its former system of consistories and synods throughout the nation.

When Napoleon was crowned Emperor, twenty-seven ministers of the French Reformed Church were officially present at his coronation. He subsequently handed a number of Roman Catholic buildings over to the Protestants including the famous 'Oratoire' facing the Louvre in Paris. Protestant buildings had been demolished under the reign of Louis XIV and some of these were rebuilt under the reign of Napoleon. As he toured the land he was greeted with joy by Protestants who extravagantly eulogised him as a Moses, Solomon or Cyrus.

### *The Catholic Church in France*

The Catholic clergy were not greatly enamoured of Napoleon. During his fifteen-year reign the Catholic Church continued to be weakened by his policies and there was a 'long catalogue of dioceses without bishops, of cardinals, prelates, and priests in prison, of congregations suppressed, of abject time-servers promoted, enriched, ennobled, and decorated'. The 'Organic Articles' associated with the Concordat of 1801 had 'deprived the bishops of authority to ordain without the leave of the State. The State,

unwilling to see its conscripts turned into priests, permitted, during the Emperor's reign...only six or seven priests to be made annually for each diocese of France.' Even more seriously the priests could only be chosen from the old and lukewarm. Although the assemblies of clergy passed their resolutions for improvement when they met together, as individuals they wilted when they faced Napoleon's officials.

After the restoration of the Monarchy the Catholic Church became less popular because of its support for the Bourbon dynasty (1815 - 1830) as headed by Louis XVIII and Charles X. The new regime favoured the Catholic party and in 1816 there was a new arrangement agreed by the French Ambassador at Rome and Cardinal Consalvi the Secretary of State to the Pope. Essentially the offending Organic Articles were dispensed with and the Concordat was re-established. Louis XVIII was a weak king and could not get the approval of his Legislature. The Pope did not approve of this and a period of uncertainty then existed as to who ruled the Church in France.

### *Gallicanism and Ultramontanism*

The priests had been suppressed during the Revolution and the reign of Napoleon and rejoiced in the restored monarchy, believing and preaching the divine right of kings to rule. This attitude was despised by the people and after the inevitable revolution of 1830, priests did not dare show themselves dressed in their soutanes (cassocks) in France. They hung on to practices that were established in the seventeenth century, formulated in 1682 by the Declaration of the Clergy of France known as Gallicanism. Under this declaration the kings of France had the right to assemble Church councils in their dominions and make laws and regulations touching ecclesiastical matters. The Pope could only send legates into France with the permission of the king of France. Conversely bishops could not leave France even when commanded by the Pope if the king of France objected. Officers of the French court could not be excommunicated for any act done as part of their duty to the king of France. Other matters were also dealt with under this declaration. Effectively the king reigned supreme in France. Clearly Gallicanism practised by the absolute kings of the eighteenth century was in sharp contrast to Ultramontanism.

Ultramontanism was applied in France to indicate support for the 'man beyond the mountains' meaning the Pope in Italy. Ultramontanism was 'closely associated with the Jesuits, who defended the superiority of Popes over councils and kings, even in temporal questions'. (However during the

seventeenth century the Jesuits, although sworn supporters of the Pope, had actually been more devoted to the king of France). Ultramontanists had support from the writings of Joseph-Marie, Comte de Maistre (1753-1821).

De Maistre, of French ancestry but born in the Duchy of Savoy, which belonged to the Kingdom of Sardinia, was thought to be educated by the Jesuits and certainly after the Revolution became their staunch ally and associated the spirit of the Revolution with that of the Jansenists, the traditional enemies of the Jesuits. This Sardinian senator and philosopher maintained that 'France had a divine mission as the principal instrument of good and of evil on earth'. He considered the Revolution of 1789 a providential occurrence: the monarchy, the aristocracy, and the whole of the old French society, instead of using the influence of French civilization to benefit mankind, had promoted the destructive atheistic doctrines of the eighteenth-century philosophers. The crimes of the Reign of Terror were the apotheosis and logical consequences of the destructive spirit of the eighteenth century, and the divinely decreed punishment for it.

In 1819 de Maistre published his 'masterpiece' *Du Pape*. His argument was summarised as follows: 'In the Church, the Pope is sovereign, and it is an essential characteristic of all sovereign power that its decisions should be subject to no appeal. Consequently, the Pope is infallible in his teaching, since it is by his teaching that he exercises his sovereignty....He argues that nations require protection against abuses of power by a sovereignty superior to all others, and that this sovereignty should be the papacy, the saviour and maker of European civilization.' As to the schismatic churches, de Maistre believed that they would fall into philosophic indifference as Catholicism was the only religion capable of resisting science.

Travers Smith showed how de Maistre in *Du Pape* attempted to win over politicians to his view on papal infallibility. He acknowledged that Catholic believers disputed about the matter of papal infallibility but argued that politicians would benefit from the concept of papal infallibility. It would be helpful for them to refer their disputes to an infallible power. They would save their precious time, money and resources if they simply asked for a binding papal decision when they had different opinions on a matter.

De Maistre's argument was that history was developing to show the need of an absolute Pope. He regarded the failures of Louis XIV with contempt. He did not hesitate to expose Louis XIV for his crimes against Catholics but made no mention of his cruel religious persecution of Protestants. De Maistre

showed hatred and contempt towards Protestants and Jansenists. The failure of everyone up to and including the Revolution and Empire was designed providentially to show the need of an absolute earthly ruler – the Pope. Travers indicated that de Maistre did not argue biblically. Paul was aware of his apostleship and defended it. If Christ had given Peter absolute power, there was no mention of his either having a knowledge of this authority or making any attempt to defend it. It is very dangerous for people to argue that they know the mind of God from providence rather than scriptural principle. Essentially De Maistre's arguments were of this nature. Furthermore his argument that politicians could save themselves time and trouble by submitting to a Pope destroyed the need to seek wisdom and hard work and led to a failure to act responsibly. His work allowed people to become passive and morally indifferent to truth. This led to ridiculous notions taking root in the Catholic Church.

Travers described how the Curé d'Ars meekly accepted a miraculous appearance of the Blessed Virgin at La Salette, even though he knew the testimony of the supposed witness denied it. This made the way open for Pope Pius IX to proclaim the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of Mary in 1854 upon his sole authority.

The brave elderly priest and universally respected scholar, the Abbé Laborde of Lectour, went to Rome to protest against the papal affirmation. He courageously brought one of his books which stated, 'No new dogma can be also true; that among all mankind One only was exempt from original sin; that those united with the chair of Peter have yet but one chief, Christ Jesus, and that Popes have been repeatedly anathematised for errors by Councils and by saints; further, that the *Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary* was unknown so late as S. Anselm [1033-1109], that John Duns Scotus [c.1266-1308] was the first major theologian who taught it openly. It began to take form only in the time of S. Bernard.' The Abbé Laborde was persecuted by the pontifical police and forcibly sent back to France to die in a hospital where he continued to protest against the papal error.

The quality of the priesthood in France declined during the nineteenth century. There were few men possessing independence of learning and thought who could stand up to the Pope. Essentially the internal checks against his authority were whittled down because the men entering the priesthood were of inferior ability having the nature of an army of subservient and unlearned foot soldiers. The Abbé Laborde was familiar with the history of the Church and sufficiently courageous to speak out what he knew was true.



The Abbé Laborde, being aware of the Mariolatry of Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) would also know that during his time there was a schism in the Catholic Church in 1130 and there were actually two Popes, each claiming to be the true Pope and have the allegiance of ‘the faithful’. King Louis VI of France called a conference of French bishops to take place at Étampes and Bernard was asked to judge between the claims of the two Popes. Bernard announced in favour of Innocent II, who had taken refuge in France, but division continued until the death of the disappointed rival Pope in 1138. The followers of the other Pope were condemned in a Council the following year. It is not too hard to see why the Abbé Laborde was so bold as to write to the Pope that ‘Popes have been repeatedly anathematised for errors by Councils and by saints’ and to contradict the papal announcement of 1854.

External checks to the absolute authority of the Pope were weak. The Gallican movement in France was weak because of the history of the French monarchs and the internal checks on the elevation of the Pope to absolute power were insipid because of the diminished quality of a servile priesthood and episcopate. Upon the fall of Napoleon there was no power able to challenge papal authority in France. Ultramontanism had received a boost from the writing of its champion de Maistre. The arrogant almost unopposed papal assertion of the Immaculate Conception of Mary paved the way for the announcement of papal infallibility.

Travers Smith wrote, ‘When the episcopate of France suffered this inroad upon the Catholic constitution, they gave away all chance of contesting papal infallibility. When the time for proclaiming that dogma had arrived, in the opinion of the “insolent and aggressive faction” who longed for it, full advantage was taken of the presumption of its truth involved in the Pope’s addition of a new article to the faith in 1854.’

At the 1870 Vatican Council in Rome, the doctrine of the infallibility of the Pope was defined: ‘We teach and define that it is a dogma divinely revealed that the Roman Pontiff, when he speaks *ex cathedra*, that is, when in discharge of the office of pastor and doctor of all Christians, by virtue of his supreme Apostolic authority, he defines a doctrine regarding faith and morals to be held by the universal Church, by the divine assistance promised him in blessed Peter, is possessed of that infallibility with which the divine Redeemer willed that His Church should be endowed for defining doctrines regarding faith and morals, and that therefore such definitions of the Roman Pontiff of themselves – and not by virtue of the consent of the Church – are irreformable.’

Lorraine Boettner in his book *Roman Catholicism* quoted these words and then added that attached to the above words was the anathema, 'But if any one – which may God forbid! – shall presume to contradict this our definition: let him be anathema.' Boettner helpfully explains the development and meaning of this doctrine. De Maistre despite advocating an absolute Pope had also predicted that there would be a check on papal authority. He asked the question, 'What shall stop the Pope?' and answered his own question in the words, 'Everything; the canons, the laws, the customs of the nations, the sovereignties, the great tribunals, national assemblies, prescriptions, representations, negotiations, duty, fear, prudence, and above all, *opinion, the queen of the world.*' De Maistre foresaw that informed opinion would dismiss this unsubstantiated new dogma even though clever arguments suggested its necessity.

Nineteenth-century pronouncements by the Catholic Church hastened further descent into scepticism and secularism within France. As the Catholic Church confirmed superstitions that were held by its adherents, a population aroused by the love of freedom, and the development that science could explain everything, and that human reason reigns supreme, rejected its teaching on Mary, its idolatrous practices, and its doctrines of transubstantiation in the celebration of the mass. French public opinion abhorred the past associations of Catholicism with religious war and cruel persecution. The people of France had been alienated by Roman Catholic worship. Did Protestants fare better during the nineteenth century?

### Notes

The second part of this article is to be published in *Reformation Today*. It describes the rise of a new day for Evangelicalism in France during the early part of the nineteenth century.

I have consulted *France...Forgotten Mission Field*, Frank Orna-Ornstein, European Missionary Fellowship, 1971. *The Church in France*, R Travers Smith, The National Churches (Edited by P H Ditchfield), Wells Gardner Dacton & Co., London. *Roman Catholicism*, Lorraine Boettner, Banner of Truth Trust, © Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1962. Readers who would like to refer to the detailed footnote source references for this article please e-mail me at [frederick.hodgson@gmail.com](mailto:frederick.hodgson@gmail.com)

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## Book Reviews

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**The Christian's Reasonable Service**, Wilhelmus à Brakel, 4 vols., translated by Bartel Elshout, editor Joel R Beeke. Retail \$160; available from Reformation Heritage Books \$90 plus postage ([heritagebooks.org](http://heritagebooks.org))

*Here is Dr. Joel Beeke's response to the question, 'If you were stranded on a desert island, and could only have one book with you beside the Bible, which book would you choose?'*

Without a doubt Wilhelmus à Brakel's *The Christian's Reasonable Service*- and not just because I would be getting four volumes for one! This massive work is arranged in three parts. The first forms a traditional Reformed systematic theology that is packed with clarity of thought, thoroughness of presentation, and helpfulness of application. The concluding applications at the end of each chapter that apply the particular doctrines discussed to the lives of believers and unbelievers are the highlight of this section. I believe that à Brakel's practical casuistry in these applications supersedes that of any other systematic theologian, both in his day and ever since. They represent Reformed, Puritan, experiential theology at its best.

The second part expounds Christian ethics and Christian living. This part covers the concluding section of volume 2, all of volume 3, and most of volume 4. It is the largest and most fascinating section of à Brakel's work, packed with salient applications on a variety of topics pertinent to living as a Christian in this world. In addition to a masterful treatment of the ten commandments (chs. 45-55) and the Lord's Prayer (chs. 68-74), this part addresses topics such as living by faith out of God's promises (ch. 42); how to exercise love toward God and his Son (chs. 56-57); how to fear, obey, and hope in God (chs. 59-61); how to profess Christ and his truth (ch. 63); and how to exercise a host of spiritual graces, such as courage, contentment, self-denial, patience, uprightness, watchfulness, neighbour love, humility, meekness, peaceableness, diligence, compassion and prudence (chs. 62, 64-67, 76, 82-88). Other topics treated most helpfully include fasting (ch. 75), solitude (ch. 77), spiritual meditation (ch. 78), singing (ch. 79), vows (ch. 80), spiritual experience (ch. 81), spiritual growth (ch. 89), backsliding (ch. 90), spiritual desertion (ch. 91), temptations (chs. 92-95), indwelling corruption (ch. 96), and spiritual darkness and deadness (chs. 97-98).

The third part (vol. 4, pp. 373-538) is devoted to a history of God's redemptive, covenantal work from the beginning to the end of the world. It is reminiscent of Jonathan Edwards' *History of Redemption*, though it is not as detailed as Edwards; à Brakel's work confines itself more to Scripture, and has a greater covenantal

emphasis. It concludes with a detailed study of the future conversion of the Jews from six passages of Scripture, Romans 11, 2 Corinthians 3, Matthew 23:38-39, Isaiah 61:1-4, Jeremiah 31:31-40, Hosea 3:4-5 (4:511-38). Note à Brakel's refreshing style in this reasoning: 'When God will fill this blind nation with his Spirit and grace, resulting in the acknowledging and receiving of the Messiah (David, their king), then a wondrous love, joy and holiness in believing will manifest itself in them. It will be a more eminent time than the age of the apostles. The Church of the Gentiles will be so quickened and revived by the conversion of Israel that her former state will appear to be such as the difference between a dead and a living person. The unconverted will be converted in great numbers, and the converted will become partakers of a wondrous increase in the measure of grace. Oh, what a glorious time this will be! Who will then be alive?' (p. 516).

*The Christian's Reasonable Service* represents, perhaps more than any other work, the Puritan heartbeat and balance of the Dutch Second Reformation. Here systematic theology and vital, experiential Christianity are scripturally and practically interwoven with a covenantal framework, the whole bearing the mark of a pastor-theologian deeply taught by the Spirit. Sweeping in coverage, nearly every subject treasured by Christians is treated in an unusually helpful way, always aiming for the promotion of godliness.

In my opinion this pastoral set of books is an essential tool for every pastor and is extremely valuable for lay people as well.

**The Ulster Awakening** – *An account of the 1859 revival in Ireland* by John Weir. First published 1860; *Banner of Truth*, 2009.

There is plenty to warm the heart in this account of the Ulster Awakening of 1859. The author was an Irish Presbyterian minister who spent time in Northern Ireland during the revival and compiled the book from his own careful observations and those of numerous other witnesses

There were remarkable features about the awakening in Ulster, some of which distinguish it from other revivals that I, at least, have read about.

1. The prominence of prayer, not only inspired by God prior to the revival but among new converts as prayer meetings sprang up all over the country. 'It has been pre-eminently, as in America, a work of the people themselves, and has manifested its power chiefly through the instrumentality and by the desire of prayer.' Again, '...Prayer is the grand characteristic, the life and essence of the Irish Awakening.'
2. Although preaching was at the heart of the revival there is not the prominence of 'preaching stars' that one reads about in other revivals. It is quite different in emphasis in this regard from the history of the Calvinistic Methodist

Fathers in Wales, where revivals tend to be tied to a succession of greatly gifted preachers. Ulster saw the great use of many men of otherwise ordinary gifts.

3. The widespread use of testimony and fellowship meetings and use of the 'lay' people. There are many accounts of people being converted not through preaching as such but through testimonies.
4. The physical effects and manifestations which were not central but three points stand out: (a) they provided opponents with an easy target to criticise; (b) they needed to be explained and occasional abuses disowned; (c) by far the majority of leaders of the revival were sober in their assessment of these manifestations, realising they were inevitable adjuncts to genuine spiritual distress or joy but were not to be encouraged. Although they were open to abuse they did not call into question the genuineness of the movement. One interesting section of the book discusses the positive role these physical effects had in sobering some crowds and contributing to the conviction of careless hearers.
5. The unity between Evangelicals in the major denominations – Presbyterians (among whom the greatest work was seen), Episcopalians, Methodists and Baptists worked together.
6. Reconciliation between foes and an end to sectarianism – the end of provocative Orange celebrations in many places.
7. Widespread conversion of Roman Catholics.
8. Profound social effects – the reduction of drinking, prostitution and crime on a wide scale.
9. A widespread and lasting work among youth and children.

John Weir makes the interesting and important observation, lest we think that God works differently with souls in times of revival, 'It is of great practical importance to observe, that the work of the Spirit on the soul of every individual convert is *substantially the same* with that which takes place but only on a more extended scale in a general Revival of religion. When many are suddenly arrested and convinced, when conversions take place in large numbers, and are attended with remarkable circumstances, the work of the Spirit attracts more of public attention...but, substantially, it is the self-same work, which has often been carried on, in silence, in the secret chamber, in the retired recesses of the heart, when one poor sinner in a congregation has been singled out... and made the subject of a saving change.'

Of the revival's genuineness, one commentator said: 'On what ...do I found my conviction that this work is divine? I answer, on the fact that I have found every one of the blessed effects which are represented in Scripture as being peculiarly the fruits of the Spirit. Everyone who has taken but a cursory glance at the work, has noticed the conviction of sin – sharp, and penetrating, and deep; and everyone who has at all looked beneath the surface has seen how the persons thus impressed will hear of only one object. Talk to them of anything else, very possibly they will



not understand you – certainly they will feel no interest in what you say; but *speak of Christ, and their attention is gained and their heart is won. This has always been to me an evidence that the work is a genuine one, as it so powerfully draws men's regard to our blessed Saviour.*'

Read this book and be stimulated to further prayer for God's great work in our own day. *Mostyn Roberts.*

This review was first published in the paper of the Reformation and Revival Fellowship. The next R and R conference will be held at Swanwick from November 15 – 17. For details contact George McIntyre on 01564 774966 or e mail [geomac@talktalk.net](mailto:geomac@talktalk.net)

### **The Reformation 1560: *The Greatest Year in Scotland's History***

John J Murray. 60 pages, £3.00. The Free Church of Scotland (Continuing). Available from Rev. David Blunt, Free Church Manse, Knockintorran, Isle of North Uist HS6 5ED.

2010 marks the 450<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation in Scotland. If ever there was a nation that was turned around decisively from darkness to light it was Scotland. The leadership and preaching ministry of John Knox are well described. This fine booklet concludes with a robust application for our day. If there were a leader like John Knox today one feature would be a breath-taking and entire disregard for political correctness seen for instance in his publication of *The First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*. *Sola Scriptura* was the key note in Knox's gospel trumpet.

The martyrdom of George Wishart is described. The Roman Catholic Cardinal Beaton witnessed his burning with evident pleasure. This unjust event aroused anger. A small band of Protestant nobles from Fife penetrated the cardinal's castle at St Andrews, roused Beaton from his bed and confronted him with drawn swords. James Melville, pointing his sword at Beaton, declared: 'Repent thee of thy former wicked life, and especially the shedding of the blood of that notable instrument of God, Master George Wishart, which, albeit the flame of fire consumed before men, yet cries out for vengeance upon thee, and we from God are sent to avenge it.' Then Cardinal Beaton came to a swift end! How Knox became a gospel slave and how he survived that ordeal is described.

Knox has been described as 'the founder of Puritanism'. His five years in England, followed by four years in Geneva, helped to make him an 'international Christian'. It also led him to make sure that the Scottish Reformation was after the Genevan model.

It is not easy to reduce the complex history of the Scotland of that period into 60 pages. John J Murray has achieved this very well.

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## Student Revival in China

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### *Revival among University Students in China, 1939-1949*

*Bob Davey*

The 1937-1945 Chinese war with Japan took place within China. During the war there was a marked expansion of the gospel in Free China through a powerful revival movement. A spiritual awakening and revival took place among university and college students. This revival started in 1939 and continued unabated after the war. It continued up to the coming to power of the Communists in 1949. This revival is of major significance in the history of the gospel in China.

### *The War with Japan 1937-1945*

The invasion by Japan led to major disruptions to life in China. The Japanese had far superior air, sea and land forces and were armed with the most modern weapons. China was nearly cut in two and the Nationalist government of Chiang Kai-shek had to move westward to set up the capital in Chungking (Chongqing) behind the safety of the Yangzi rapids and gorges. War provisions for China then had to come all the way overland from Russia, or from French Indo-China by railway to Kunming in Yunnan province, or by road from Burma along the 'Burma Road' to Kunming. By 1942 allied supplies had no choice but to come by air from India over the 'Hump' to Kunming.

During the war up to eighty million people became refugees, many thousands of them Christians. Refugees included missionaries whose countries were at war with Japan. These all fled westward to comparative safety behind the Chinese lines of defence. Providentially in this way the gospel was spread to many places and reached many people unacquainted with the good news of salvation in Christ in the north-west, west and south-west of China. Universities and colleges, their staff and students, all packed their libraries and scientific instruments and fled before the advancing invaders to the safety of the mountains in the west, in Free China. Some factory complexes essential for the war effort managed to do likewise, but most factory complexes in east China fell into Japanese hands. The Japanese bombed everywhere they could with little opposition. J Edwin Orr was in south-west China between October and December 1938. In his book *Through Blood and Fire in China* he gives a

graphic account of the bombings in which he and Andrew Gih were caught.

After the nefarious bombing of Pearl Harbour in the Philippines on 7 December 1941 by the Japanese, war was declared by the USA, Great Britain, Netherlands East Indies, Australia, New Zealand and six Latin American countries. Hong Kong fell to the Japanese on Christmas Day 1941. The war spread throughout the Pacific and the allies were hard-pressed. Gradually the tide turned and in late 1943 Winston Churchill, President Roosevelt and Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek met in Cairo and agreed on the terms they would impose on Japan in the event of victory. Even so by the end of 1944 the Japanese looked like crushing the Nationalist government of China. The atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki on 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> August 1945 brought a swift unconditional surrender of Japan six days later. The war was over in China.

During the war with Japan Chiang Kai-shek's policy of consolidation and unification was thrown into reverse gear. Wartime conditions encouraged corruption, black marketeering and hyper-inflation. By contrast the disciplined Communists safe in the remote north-west found themselves able to consolidate and even expand their hold on parts of northern China.

### *Revival*

Paul Contento was an Italian American and missionary in Ningxia, Inner Mongolia 1929-1936. In 1939 he returned to China, having been abroad for Muslim studies. By necessity the route back into China was by the south-west into the province of Yunnan where there happened to be about a million Muslims. He arrived at the capital Kunming with his gifted wife Maida. They contemplated staying there to work among the Muslims. They had been there but a very short time when they had visitors. At the door stood some Chinese university students wanting to learn English. The Contentos were astonished, for they knew that Chinese students were so nationalistic and anti-foreign that they would have nothing to do with foreigners. The war with Japan was having unexpected effects. Thousands of elite university and college students from the great cities like Peking, Tientsin, Shanghai and Nanking were in this particular area. They were now expressing a desire to learn English. Paul Contento replied that he had no textbooks. The students suggested, 'Use your English Bible, we know that it is better than Shakespeare.' Paul Contento says, 'So that's what we did. We never did get started among the Muslims there.'

The Gospels in English were mimeographed and used. The pattern for teaching was set. Both Paul and his Scottish wife Maida would teach one hour

each, 'forty-five minutes pure English, fifteen minutes gospel. There were forty or fifty in each class, four classes each, every morning. They would wait in a line, you know. One class out, one class in ....one class out.... It was unbelievable, unbelievable. That was the beginning of the student work in China. A very remarkable thing.... we found the parables and the metaphors of the Gospels wonderful material to teach both English and the gospel to the Chinese students... the rich young ruler, the story of Lazarus, the rich man who went to hell, and above all the Prodigal Son because of the high value placed on loyalty to parents in China.'

Maida Contento, as Maida Bolster, had been one of the founding members of the Inter-Varsity Fellowship in Edinburgh University. Inter-Varsity Fellowship organised student Christian groups in universities and colleges to meet for Bible study, prayer, training in principles of Bible study, discipleship and evangelism among students. 'So we started an Inter-Varsity group right then and there in Kunming, the first China Inter-Varsity Christian Student Fellowship. We were very fortunate to find a very keen and able Christian medical student who became the first chairman.' Paul Contento goes on to say, 'And from there on the students kept moving. They came to Kunming, then they'd go to Guiyang in Guizhou (Kweichow) province and then they'd go to Chengdu in western Sichuan (Szechwan) province. You see, the government moved them to where there was plenty of rice available. And Sichuan was a real rice country. And so they settled at half a dozen universities there.' Thus the gospel spread.

The Inter-Varsity Christian Student Fellowship took root and spread rapidly. The Contentos were sent north by their mission, the China Inland Mission, and they became members of staff teaching English at North-west University. This was at Hanzhong in Shensi (Shaanxi) province, south of Xian, where there was a cluster of exiled universities. Inter-Varsity took root there too, as it did at Chengdu in western Sichuan where Paul Contento taught for a year and which was home for two great universities and the refuge for five others. It was there 'I hooked up with an old friend of mine, Calvin Chao (Zhao Junying). And, oh, he had great power, he had great power. I remember in one service there in Chungking, he was preaching. There were over a thousand students, and there was hardly a dry eye in the audience... two hundred came to the front not only to be saved but to dedicate their lives to the Lord....you know that revival was genuine because students began to confess their sins publicly and then do something about it. Students who had stolen books out of the library took the books back and told the director of the university. It's not like Chinese to ... to confess their sin publicly, you see.'

## *Calvin Chao*

Calvin Chao (Zhao Junying, 1906-1996) was educated at mission schools. At high school he played quarterback in the first Chinese team of American football in China. At college Chao was afflicted seriously with tuberculosis and had to go to the Southern Presbyterian Mission Love and Mercy Hospital at Tsingkiangpu (Lianyungang) on the coast of Kiangsu (Jiangsu) province, north of Shanghai. Dr Nelson Bell was his physician (whose daughter Ruth was to marry Dr Billy Graham). After recovery Chao was converted in 1931 at one of the early series of revival meetings held by Andrew Gih and the Bethel Band and soon became an evangelist in the team.

In 1943 China Native Evangelistic Crusade (CNEC, later Partners International) was formed by a group of Christian businessmen in Seattle USA in the living room of a dentist Dr N A Jepson. They sent a cablegram to Calvin Chao asking him if he would prayerfully consider leading a Chinese evangelistic movement in China. They would provide the resources. Calvin Chao saw that this was an answer to prayer. By February 1945 Calvin Chao had 22 national workers and 22 students in training.

## *China Inter-Varsity Christian Student Fellowship*

The Inter-Varsity Christian Student Fellowship (IVF) movement had so spread that as Contento says, 'In (July) 1945 we had a great convention in Chungking. And I was there. There were representatives from fifty Chinese colleges and universities already. That was when Inter-Varsity went national. ...Calvin Chao was the first executive secretary of the All-China Inter-Varsity Committee (CIVF).' The CNEC were the ones who sponsored and made possible this great Christian student conference in Chungking. Many non-Christians attended as well. Many were converted and many dedicated their lives to the service of Christ. It was a wonderful time of continuing revival. Many Chinese Christian student groups and Chinese churches around the world today can trace their roots to the spiritual movement brought to birth by this conference.

Such were stirring events for the furtherance of the gospel in China even while the nation was being subjected to the horrors of war.

## *China after World War II*

After World War II civil war broke out in China between the official Nationalist (Kuomintang) government of Chiang Kai-shek and the



Communists. The government of Chiang Kai-shek collapsed, depleted in resources and morale. It was given no time to recover from the shock, weariness and disruption caused by World War II. In October 1948 Mukden (Shenyang) in Manchuria was taken by the Communists. This gave them access to the Trans-Siberian railway and supplies from Russia. The effect in China was shattering. The currency fell and the rich rushed to get out of China. In January 1949 the Communists took Peking (Beijing) and Tientsin (Tianjin) and on 1 October 1949 Mao Zedong proclaimed the birth of the People's Republic of China from the Tiananmen (the gate of heavenly peace) in Beijing.

### *Continuing Revival among the University and College Students*

When the students and their universities and colleges returned home after the war, the revival continued to reap a harvest for the gospel. This continued unabated, right up until the Communists came to power in 1949.

Student Christian work had been almost entirely in the hands of the Student Christian Movement before 1939. The SCM was dominated by liberal theology, liberal leadership, and social concerns. After 1945 young Chinese Evangelicals predominated in the student Christian work. They worked apart from the SCM.

Something of the flavour of what was actually happening among the students in this awakening and revival can be seen by what Paul Contento observed among some students in an engineering college in the north-west. It took him by surprise. Some of his students began holding an early morning prayer meeting, which meant meeting at four o'clock in the morning. Paul Contento went along. 'Those guys really meant business, they were really serious. They'd believe that sin was sin. You'd got to get rid of it...this guy was holding a candle in this dark room, reading some Scripture. They'd start to pray one after another, the whole circle round, and no matter your feet were freezing, you just stood there...one girl said to me, "I heard about this meeting and I..I..I laughed at it." She said, "I'll go and see what they do... As they were praying I suddenly realised I was a sinner." And so she said she prayed in her turn, "Lord, I know that *I'm* a sinner now. Please forgive *me* and cleanse *my* sins.".. and so it went on..it was really the work of the Spirit of God.'

David Adeney recalls that the winter 1945 Chungking China IVF Conference was 'packed and every day there were students coming to know Christ. Between meetings, there were prayer meetings everywhere. The ferry people knew something was going on by the number of students who came to pay for

the false tickets with which the students had defrauded them. There was a great stir when one student had gone to the authorities and confessed he had entered university with a false graduation certificate. There was just a great sense of the working of the Spirit of God in the midst of the students.' Many students who found Christ went to teach at schools, and there they would witness for Christ. A few Christians would then meet together for Bible study and worship, and call themselves a Students' Christian Fellowship.

Paul Contento was on the national committee of the China IVF, as an advisor. He was authorised to contact the British and American IVFs, with the view of starting an international fellowship. So it was that in 1946 the China IVF joined with nine other IVFs (Australia, Britain, Canada, France, Holland, New Zealand, Norway, Switzerland and the USA) to form the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES). For a time China was the largest movement affiliated. Calvin Chao and Paul Contento were the delegates representing China at the formation meeting held at Harvard University in the USA.

### *Student Conferences*

There were many student conferences held across China in the four years between 1945 and 1949.

In July and August 1946 a memorable China IVF conference was held in Peking. It commenced with a prayer conference for students held at the Christian Tabernacle, the church of Wang Mingdao in Peking. The conference was followed by an evangelistic campaign for students, which was held in the Salvation Army Citadel. Wang Mingdao was the main preacher. There were many conversions. Small groups from the fifteen colleges and universities returning from west China at that time hardly knew each other. There were however several outstanding student Christian leaders, who were well organised. On Sunday mornings at 8 a.m. a fellowship meeting at the Tabernacle attracted about 150 students. A wall-newspaper recorded the multiplying activities of the unions and the activities of the newly formed Peking Fellowship of Christian Students.

In July 1947 350 students from every Chinese university gathered for the Second National Conference of Evangelical Students (China IVF), held outside Nanking. Students came by land, sea and air. The speakers were Calvin Chao, David Yang, Andrew Gih and the venerable Dr Jia Yuming. Calvin Chao opened the conference with a reminder that Christians must expect and be prepared for persecution and suffering in the name of Jesus. Testimonies at the closing meeting sparked a revival among the students.

Communist students were always trying to infiltrate the organisation. They did not realise that they stood out like sore thumbs. One strategy used to prevent them succeeding was to have two-hour prayer meetings at the election meetings, immediately before the voting. Even so, when the revolution came, most of the groups had been infiltrated.

In August 1947 the Peking Fellowship of Christian Students had its own local summer conference. It was held in the ramshackle buildings that once were the Emperor's stables, outside the Summer Palace walls. The facilities were of the simplest kind, but it was a spiritually glorious week. The preaching of David Yang had a profound effect, as did that of Wang Mingdao who preached on 'sin', 'the virgin birth', 'the Resurrection of Christ' and 'the Second Coming'. Already, as if in anticipation of a deluge of suffering to be endured in the near future, the prayer times were overwhelming. There was a profound spiritual renewal going on in the souls of the students. The final testimony meeting went on for hours, as the students poured out their hearts with thanksgiving for what God had done in their lives. Truck loads of students returned to Peking, singing hymns of praise. This annual student conference managed to meet until 1955.

In late January 1948 a student conference was held for a week in Peking. It was crowded. By this time the left-wing students in Peking were militantly active against the Christian students. Wang Mingdao warned against 'false prophets'. In the words of the eye-witness Leslie Lyall, it was 'another memorable conference, characterised by the almost incessant sound of prayer between the meetings, from every available room in the house. Here were young people, knowing that the future held only great trials, who were determined to get to know God in a real and deep way.' The Peking Youth for Christ Committee then arranged what was the largest evangelistic campaign ever to be held in Peking.

Later in 1948 the Second Summer Conference of the Peking Fellowship of Christian Students was held. The chief speaker was Calvin Chao of China IVF, who came from Nanking, where the headquarters of China IVF were then based. Pastor Xu Hung-dao gave a series on the Song of Songs and Wang Mingdao highlighted lessons from his twenty years of married life. The spiritual zeal and courage displayed by the students were tremendously impressive. Peking was to fall into Communist hands within months, in January 1949.

The China IVF went into voluntary dissolution when it saw it was in danger of being taken over by a Communist regime, who would only use it for its own ends.

## *Assessment of the Student Christian Work*

Marcus Cheng was in a position to evaluate the student Christian movement from the viewpoint of a theological seminary principal. He noted that the movement did have its weaknesses. Christian students were too easily taken up with their own fellowships and activity among fellow students. They often lacked church consciousness, and the importance of the oneness of all believers. Among those who consecrated themselves for Christian service, there was too often the notion that studying and training were not necessary for it. These things were low on their priorities. Also it was the custom in China to marry young, and the new marital responsibilities hindered, if not prevented, many from considering training at a seminary. The result was that there was a *shortage* of applicants, even in such stirring spiritual times as Marcus Cheng was living in. Nevertheless many of the best minds in China had been converted to Christ. Through the fires of persecution they were to be tempered. The survivors were to emerge as mature leaders within the Body of Christ.

The good outweighed the bad, immeasurably. The revival was not confined to students. The Protestant churches in general experienced a spiritual depth and fruitfulness that was not to be extinguished by the onslaught of determined Communist persecution that engulfed them after 1949. It can be said with confidence that this revival became the fulcrum for the astonishing growth of the Chinese Protestant Church during the following fifty years. What a remarkable decade!

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## News

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*Group photo taken at the annual ARBCA General Assembly held this year at Grace Baptist Church, Taylors, South Carolina*

### USA

This year a record number of 244 attendees gathered at the annual ARBCA (Association of Reformed Baptist Churches of America) General Assembly. There are now 73 churches in association with ARBCA. Over at least 25 years much hard work has been put into the establishment of this association designed to foster unity, plant churches and support missionaries. David Straub was the first travelling coordinator. He was followed by Bob Selph whose labours like those of David Straub were herculean. Bob has now returned to be pastor of Grace Baptist Church, Taylors, South Carolina. For a couple of years now Gordon Taylor has filled the portfolio of travelling coordinator for ARBCA.

If outpourings of the Holy Spirit are experienced in the 27 nations of the European Union it would be vital for Reformed Baptists to have in place an

organizational unity which is similar to and equivalent of ARBCA. Many lessons will have been learned by ARBCA which are of great value. One of these is that we must major on major issues and maintain liberty on minor matters. Also while holding to our distinctives we must maintain generous attitudes to other Bible-believing groups. The Association of Reformed Baptist Churches of the European Union ARBCEU would serve to plant churches, support missionaries, encourage translation work and publishing and be a source to solve disputes when called upon to do so. I know of RB churches in most the EU countries. These are nearly all isolated small assemblies. The need for doctrinal unity, mutual encouragement and co-operation is paramount. It is interesting to note that the population of the EU nations is now 500 million (see Eurostat) while that of the USA is 300 million.

## Indonesia

Pastor Stephen Nowak returned during June from his second three-week visit to Jakarta. Most of his work was preaching and teaching in SETIA the seminary which trains students for church planting. Through his visit over 6,000 books were distributed. The shortage of expository books is like a famine. One college for training in Sumatra has 150 students with hardly any books. This is being remedied. In RT 234 we reported the dire living circumstances for 1,100 SETIA students in Jakarta who had been attacked and driven out of their premises. Temporary accommodation has now been found which is suitable. The foremost need is to find and train students of a high calibre who are willing to persevere in and endure dangerous situations in church planting in the vast land of islands which is Indonesia.

## Prof Andy McIntosh and Creation

Prof Andy McIntosh has decided to retire from his current role at Leeds University as from the 30th of September. He writes: 'However, rather than stop completely at the university I am re-engaging with the university in a different Research Professor role. This fits well since I have some developing work going very well on the biomimetics (Bombardier Beetle) research – all inspired by realising that the Creator's hand had made an amazing valve system on the 1mm long combustion chamber of this special creature which produces a spray which is of great interest to many engineering applications. I shall

continue some of this research but overall I am freed up to control much more my own time so that administrative and teaching roles are no longer my responsibility (apart from a small number of lectures they have asked me still to do).'

Prof McIntosh urges the importance of this subject. 'If we do not connect the gospel for young people to the history / biology / science in the physical world and show how a Christian worldview coherently explains the world around us, we are not doing right by our children. That is so much the theme of Ken Ham's book *Already Gone* which you all ought to read. The Creation ministry is not just about evangelism (much as I love to see folk come to the Lord through it); it is as much about equipping the evangelical church to teach carefully and effectively its own young people how the Word of God embraces and gives the framework for all knowledge.'

## France

A little over a year ago David Vaughn announced to the church in Grenoble that he would be leaving the assembly in the summer of 2011 to begin a new church plant elsewhere in France. At this point it is probable that he will go to the city of Aix-en-Provence in the south of France. A small group of believers have constituted a church in Aix-en-Provence and have adopted the 1689 Confession. Aix-en-Provence is a large university city and is home to the only Evangelical and Reformed (Presbyterian) Seminary in France. Paul Wells is the dean.

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# What is the Glory Promised to Christians?

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*Tom Wells*

In 1 Corinthians 2:7 Paul speaks of God's secret wisdom. He means by that the many things God planned for Christ and his people that men did not fully understand in earlier ages. He adds that 'God destined [these things] for our glory before time began'. In the New Testament we discover many of these good things. But it also suggests that many of these things are yet future. That is, we will grasp them in eternity.

Since that is the case, we might suppose we cannot now know anything about the eternal future. Of course that idea is false. But we do notice an important fact. When we look to that future it is easiest to speak of what it will *not* be like. God's Word assures us that there will be no more tears, 'no more death, or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away' (Rev 21:4). We could turn all of this into a positive statement: we'll have life and joy and health, etc. But that doesn't get us very far. And when we ask for more, we meet figures of speech that suggest the same things but are certainly not photos of the realities. We read of the New Jerusalem that 'the wall was made of jasper, and the city of pure gold, as pure as glass' (Rev 21:18). That points to something wonderful, but what is it?—that's the question! There is mystery here. That is not surprising since we have trouble grasping 'earthly things'. But we also need to mine the NT for what more it says. So let's do that together, one thing at a time.

## 1. *Enjoying the full splendour of God*

I might have said '*see*' the full splendour of God. I chose the word *enjoy* to make a comparison with looking at the sun. In a sense we see the sun, but not fully. We enjoy its splendour, its majesty, its greatness and glory. However, a great deal of it is hidden from us. In addition we cannot stare at it without going blind. Already in this life we see God's greatness and majesty. That is a down payment on our experience in the new heavens and earth. In this life the natural man either denies splendour in creation, or assigns it to something less than the true God. But our ability to avoid those



errors is a gift of God's grace and an early instalment on fuller enjoyment in God. Today we are like children in our understanding. In Paul's words, 'For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known' (1 Cor 13:9-12) There is tremendous promise in those words, even if we must remember that to know anything fully will remain beyond us. However, what we know then will be full knowledge indeed – compared to what we know now!

## 2. *Moral likeness to the Lord Jesus*

What is the most obvious promise God gives us as we try to look into eternity? We will be like the Lord Jesus in our moral character. Hear the apostle John on this point: 'Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure' (1 John 3:2-3). Note four things here. First, the large extent of our ignorance about our future state. We don't know 'what we will be'! Second, we do know one thing – 'we shall be like him.' Third, we know how we will be like him. We will be 'pure' that is, our moral character will be free from sin. Fourth, we must seek that purity now, praying for it and striving for it. That's what everyone must do who belongs to the Lord Jesus.

Paul also teaches us to expect this moral likeness to Jesus. Listen to him in Romans 8:28-30: 'And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.' Right in the middle, in verse 29, Paul puts his finger on this point: God has predestined his people to be like Christ. Here Paul does not limit this likeness to Jesus to our moral characters. But as John has shown us, that must be a main ingredient in our change. Here verse 30 shows its certainty. That glorious change is the final step in a long process,

starting with God's choosing each of his people for it. Then he called us to be his own. He forgave us our sins. And only then did he glorify us.

This last idea, 'he glorified us', raises an important question. Paul speaks as if this were already done – past tense! What's going on here? Are we already glorified? I don't think anyone could confuse my present body with a glorified body! Let me bring out the answer to this problem with an illustration from ancient monarchies. If a king with absolute power in his kingdom commanded one of the members of his court to do something, he might get the answer, 'It is done, Your Majesty!' Why? Because the courtier knew it had to be done – no ifs, ands or buts! It was as absolutely certain as anything human could be. Of course, being a human command it might fail. If it did, the courtier might well lose his head! Now Paul, I think, uses the past tense here to show the full certainty of the outcome. In God's case, to determine something means it will be done. That's Paul's point. And he backs it up by finishing chapter 8 on the triumphant note of certainty that God's love for his people will carry it out. Nothing will separate us from God and the glory he has planned for us. That includes our likeness to the Lord Jesus.

### 3. *Sharing the inheritance of Jesus Christ*

One thing that has not changed since Paul's day is the fact that children are often their relatives' heirs. In Galatians 4:1-2 Paul speaks of this fact. He also speaks of our sharing Christ's inheritance in Romans 8:16-17. 'The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.' In this place Paul does not tell us in detail what our inheritance will be. What else can we expect? One thing is clear when we enter eternity. We will no longer be troubled by sin. When Jesus left this world he entered into a life in which wrestling with sin was left behind. Till then the sin of others caused him great trouble, especially in his public ministry. In the Gospel of Mark we meet no human enemies of Jesus in chapter one. However in the next chapter they come on stage with a vengeance! And nothing changes from then on, until they finally see him nailed to a cross. In many ways the program for Jesus was suffering – then glory! The whole Bible bears out that this is God's program for his people as well. We wrestle with sin daily, our own and others'. But a day is coming and can't be far off when it will be, in the words of a hymn, 'Only glory by and by!'

Christ also inherited a new creation that was liberated from frustration, decay. Paul tells us about it in Romans 8:19-21: 'The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.' Of course this is the creation we shall enjoy forever. More than that, we will rule over it. That will be part of our enjoyment. Listen to the writer of Hebrews on this: 'It is not to angels that he has subjected the world to come, about which we are speaking. But there is a place where someone has testified: "What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? You made him a little lower than the angels; you crowned him with glory and honour and put everything under his feet. In putting everything under him, God left nothing that is not subject to him. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to him"' (Heb 2:5-8).

When God created Adam he placed Adam in charge of the earth. Adam held it in trust for his Maker. But shortly, without realising what he was doing Adam put it into the hands of Satan, the fallen angel. However, that was not the end of the story. As the Bible shows throughout, God remained King. With the incarnation and kingship of the Son, God has put it into human hands once more. And that is not the end either. There is to be further progress. Hebrews shows that once more redeemed humanity shall rule the earth, holding it in trust for God. What will that mean? The end of verse eight shows a difference between present existence and future glory. What we can't see now, we'll see later.

A chief point, however, will probably be the creative use of what God supplies to us in the new creation. The world lies before man's gaze and he controls what he can. But much escapes him. That's our frustration. The coming world will be without frustration. All things will peacefully go on under redeemed humanity.

#### 4. *An imperishable body*

In Philippians 3:20-21 Paul writes: 'The Lord Jesus . . . will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.' He goes on to

confirm this at length in 1 Corinthians 15:42-44a in describing our new bodies: ‘So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.’ The older I get, the better this sounds. Our present body is somewhat adapted to this world, but it has been weakened by the Fall. We look for a ‘spiritual’ body, i.e. a body adapted to all the wonderful things we have been citing above.

How different will all things be then? Again we do not know the details, but Paul gives us a strong hint for this life and for the future when he writes, ‘He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all – how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?’ (Rom 8:32). The ‘all things’ in 8:28 are the all things we experience daily now. But in verse 32 Paul is responding to the promise of future glory. No doubt, then, he does not limit this promise to the present age. We get ‘all things’ for ever. Like ourselves, Paul doesn’t know the many details. Only the mind of God is sufficient to encompass them all.

Yet Paul has a further hint of an enormous difference in Romans 8:26: ‘In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.’ By saying ‘in our weakness’ Paul shows he is looking at this present life. But one of two things must be implied in confining this to our present state. Either he means that we will know exactly what to ask for in the eternal future, or he means that we will have no need to ask for things at all. Either way our weakness will be overcome.

##### *5. What should our attitude be toward these things?*

First of all, we should look forward to them, anticipate them. In Romans 5:2 Paul writes: ‘We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.’ If we use the Lord’s prayer we already do this in some degree when we pray, ‘Thy kingdom come.’ God answers that prayer in the present as the Lord Jesus rules from heaven even now. Here the language of ‘already/not yet’ applies. The kingship that God brought when he brought his Son into his public ministry in Israel goes on for ever. Inauguration day is already behind us, but the completion runs out into eternity.

This raises an important question. Whose glory does Paul have in mind here, God's or ours? Do we dare say, Both? I think we must. If God were not glorious, we could not be. But in verse three Paul speaks of our present sufferings. With this in mind he no doubt has our future glory in mind as well.

Second, if we embrace future glory as our hope, we should embrace the means God uses to prepare us for glory; suffering and tribulation. Note how Paul brings these two things, suffering and glory, together in 2 Corinthians 4:17-18. 'For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.' As in Romans we fix our hope on what is unseen, that is, the promise from God of future glory.

Speaking of the completed salvation yet to be revealed when Christ returns, Peter writes, 'In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith – of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire – may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed' (1 Peter 1:6-7).

Third, we must avoid making present accomplishments our glory. Where we may legitimately exercise power in this creation, we may do so. But as Paul learned so graphically from his 'thorn in the flesh', we must never be ashamed of our weakness. 'Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong' (2 Cor 12:8-10). In the meantime our glory is yet future. 'All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord stands forever' (1 Peter 1:24-25.). So then, 'When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory' (Col 3:4). We live by hope and faith joined to obedience, so as Paul exhorted the Thessalonians, let us 'live lives worthy of God who calls you into his kingdom and glory' (1 Thess 2:12).

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## Imputed Righteousness Defended

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John Piper responded to N T Wright's teaching on justification in his book **THE FUTURE OF JUSTIFICATION**, Crossway, 238 pages, 2007. The following is material is based on a portion of *The Future of Justification* and was originally co-authored by David Mathis and John Piper and published in Ligonier's Tabletalk Magazine, February 2010.

Preliminary comment. It is disappointing that Wright is not engaging his critics as well as they are engaging him.

Is N T Wright confusing us?

Probably the best short summary of the central issue at stake is by David Mathis as follows:

The 'Nonsense' of Justifying the Ungodly

by David Mathis

*'If we use the language of the law court, it makes no sense whatever to say that the judge imputes, imparts, bequeaths, conveys or otherwise transfers his righteousness to either the plaintiff or the defendant. Righteousness is not an object, a substance or a gas which can be passed across the courtroom.'* N T Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said*, p. 98.

There are at least three problems with N T Wright's claim that imputing God's righteousness to a defendant is a category mistake and 'makes no sense.'

First, Wright's definition of the righteousness of God is too shallow. He fails to go to the heart of the matter and

stays at the level of what divine righteousness does rather than what it is. He defines God's righteousness by saying that it keeps covenant, judges impartially, deals properly with sin, and advocates for the helpless. But none of those is what righteousness is; they are only some of the things righteousness does.

The space we have here is not enough to focus in depth on the righteousness of God; a summary statement will have to suffice for what I think is a more faithful reading of Paul and the wider Scriptures concerning God's righteousness: The essence of the righteousness of God is his unwavering faithfulness to uphold the glory of his name. And human righteousness is the same: the unwavering faithfulness to uphold the glory of God.

Here it must do to say that when Wright says the righteousness of the judge is his 'trying the case impartially' and the righteousness of the defendant is his 'being declared in the right', his framework fails to get at the meaning of righteousness behind these different expressions. Therefore, he forces a portrayal of historic imputation which 'makes no sense at all'.

This is not because imputation itself makes no sense but because Wright has set things up in a way that makes it look nonsensical. And this is because he treats the righteousness of God merely in terms of the actions of the judge, not in terms of his deeper attribute of righteousness.

The second problem with Wright's law-court imagery is that it does not seem to come to terms with the fact that the judge

is omniscient. The omniscience of the judge implies that the defendant must have a different righteousness from that which Wright would concede, that is, a righteousness that is more than the mere status of being acquitted, regardless of innocence or guilt. Wright stresses that for the defendant, righteousness is not a character quality but a status, namely, that the court has found in the defendant's favour. The defendant may or may not have committed the crime with which he was charged. Regardless, if the court finds in his favour, he is 'righteous'. He has that status.

This definition of 'righteous' may work in human law courts where judges are fallible and their judgments must stand, whether they are right or wrong. But there's a catch. In God's courtroom, the judge is omniscient and just. And in such a courtroom there can never be a case where there is a discrepancy between the truth of the charge and the truth of the verdict. In this court what would be the basis of saying, 'I bestow on you the status of righteous, and I find you guilty as charged'? How could such a finding be intelligible, not to mention just?

One right answer that I think Wright would agree with is that this is what the atonement is all about. Christ died for our sins to provide a basis for this finding, and therefore, though guilty, the court can exercise clemency (or in God's case, forgiveness) because of Christ, and so we go free.

God's clemency in the courtroom and his personal forgiveness are certainly true and glorious. We will sing of it to all eternity. But the question is whether Paul has something to add – an even wider basis for our justification – something

that makes our salvation even more wonderful and brings more glory to our Saviour. I think he does. It emerges when we realise that in the courtroom, treating as innocent a defendant who is known in the court to be guilty (letting him go free without condemnation) on the basis of clemency (or forgiveness) would not have been described as 'justifying' him.

If the omniscient and just judge found a person guilty as charged, the court would not say that clemency (or forgiveness) gives rise to the declaration of a status of righteous. Forgiveness and clemency can commute a sentence, but they cannot mean the judge finds in the defendant's favor. An omniscient and just judge always vindicates the claim that is true. If the defendant is guilty, the omniscient, just judge finds in favour of the plaintiff. The judge may show mercy. He has it in his power to bestow clemency, to forgive, and not to condemn the guilty. But not condemning the guilty would never have been called 'justification' or 'finding in favour' or 'bestowing the status of righteous'.

The third problem in Wright's way of setting up the law-court imagery is that he calls 'nonsense' what in fact really does happen. Because of Jesus' work it is not in fact nonsense to speak of the defendant in some sense sharing in the righteousness of the judge. It is not a category mistake to speak of the defendant 'receiving the judge's righteousness.' This is, in fact, what the language of justification demands in a law court where the judge is omniscient and just and the charge is 'none is righteous' (Rom 3:10). Of course, it will jar the ordinary human categories. That is what the justification of the ungodly has always done – and is meant to do.



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