

REFORMATION TODAY



MAY - JUNE 2011

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Websites www.reformation-today.org

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

<http://africanpastorsconference.com>



One of the church plants referred to in the article Concert of Prayer guidelines, is in the heart of Escape which is a mega complex for diners, shoppers and pleasure seekers. The activities include an indoor ski slope, soccer circus, rock climbing, sky park, cinemas, bowling, fan drop, robocoaster-(the only robocoaster in the UK) and mini golf. This is an ideal place to plant a church. Escape is in Castleford, Yorkshire, WF10 4TA. The photo was taken at the Yorkshire Reformed Ministers' Fraternal which meets in the same accommodation as the church plant in the heart of the Escape complex.



Part of Escape interior. Pastor Glyn Williams is on the right.

Front cover picture – A perspective view of ExCel centre the venue for the all-night prayer meeting, referred to in the editorial.

Editorial

In the article Concert of Prayer there is this statement: 'We have sunk to the lowest evils when proven faithful parents are denied the right to continue to foster children because they do not accept homosexuality as normal. This is forcing our consciences against the Bible.' Is this not exaggerated? The answer is No when we consider that Owen and Eunice Johns, both Pentecostal Evangelical believers, married for 40 years and living in Derbyshire, are now banned from foster care because they do not agree with homosexuality. This is the judgment of two High Court justices, Lord Justice Munby and Mr Justice Beatson, in a precedent-setting case interpreting the *Sexual Orientation Regulations* which were made under powers conferred by Parliament; the judges were making comments, by the way, about the whole character of English common law and the Scots civilian law.

The manifold need of children is well-documented in the secular press. This need is increasing not diminishing. The denial to allow Owen and Eunice Johns (who have provided a secure and loving family home to foster dozens of children between the age of five and ten), can



Owen and Eunice Johns

be regarded as a test case and become the norm in the UK. The absurdity of the judgment pronounced against this experienced couple can be seen in observing that little children between the age of five and ten are ignorant of the casuistry involved in this business. The way of the future will be for Bible believers to be placed under pressure to deny their faith and subscribe to the popular politically correct creed of atheists. *The Daily Telegraph* took this matter up in an editorial during April. The heading was *Foster parents defeated by the new Inquisition*. This editorial concluded with this warning:

'Already the Roman Catholic Church has had to close its adoption agencies because they cannot conform to the law. Perhaps there is a historical irony here, because we are witnessing a modern, secular

Inquisition – a determined effort to force everyone to accept a new set of orthodoxies or face damnation as social heretics if they refuse. Parliament and the courts should protect people like Mr and Mrs Johns, but have thrown them to the wolves.’

Liberalism – a tsunami!

‘Liberalism – a tsunami!’ is the title given to the article by John J Murray which with his kind permission is extracted from his book *Catch the Vision* (EP). The shocking TV images of the tsunami that struck the north eastern coast of Japan are still in our minds. It is estimated that 28,000 perished in this disaster. Subsequently tens of thousands are living in evacuation centres.

The rise of Liberalism in the latter half of the nineteenth century was like a spiritual tsunami which had devastating effects on the churches. There is a difference because the physical tsunami is quick whereas the liberal tsunami is pervasive over a period of time. Abandoned church buildings and depleted congregations testify to this tsunami. Only now are there signs of recovery. A Concert of Prayer for revival is called for. The group described by Dr Jonathan Bayes is small compared with the 20,000 that gather annually for an all night 6.00 PM to 6.00 AM prayer meeting at the ExCel centre in London.

This unusual annual prayer meeting is led by the Redeemed Christian Church of God. The Statement of Faith declares ‘belief in the Divine inspiration of the Bible; the Trinity; the deity, virgin birth, sinless life, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, and return of Jesus; man, by voluntary disobedience and transgression, falling into sin; salvation being through repentance and faith; the baptism of the Holy Spirit, evidenced by speaking in tongues; that Divine healing is provided through the atonement; the pre-tribulation rapture of the church; the thousand year reign of Jesus Christ; the final judgment of all the wicked; eternal heaven and eternal hell being literal final places of destiny; water baptism by immersion; in the Lord’s supper as a memorial; and restitution of Christians righting wrongs they have committed.’

We agree with most of this and can learn from the last sentence but have to contest the clauses: ‘the baptism of the Holy Spirit, evidenced by speaking in tongues; that Divine healing is provided through the atonement; and the pre-tribulation rapture of the church’. Also we believe that Christ is reigning all the time rather than confining that to a period of one thousand years.

As for our urgent need of a nationwide revival we are in hearty agreement.

Concert of Prayer



City Evangelical Church – pastor of the church is Michael Luehrmann seen in the foreground with the editor

Leeds – March 26 2011

Jonathan Bayes

It was a terrific encouragement. It was Saturday morning, March 26th. About 150 from more than 22 churches all over Yorkshire had gathered at City Evangelical Church in Leeds. They came to pray specifically for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on our churches, our region, and our nation. Some travelled 60 or 70 miles to be there.

The gathering was the result of a call to prayer issued by the Yorkshire Reformed Ministers'

Fellowship. The members of the Fellowship were troubled about the state of the nation and the lack of impact which the gospel is making. They are burdened too that we should pray for the outpouring of God's Spirit.

The morning began with an explanation of the biblical and historical basis for doing such a thing. This was presented by Erroll Hulse. This is important because not everyone believes in revival. He pointed us to 2 Chronicles 7:14 and the need for humility and repentance as we plead God's wonderful promises. He challenged

us that our own love for Jesus needs to be rekindled. He reminded us of our national history, and of the advance of the gospel in many parts of the world today. God's mighty works at other times and in other places give us confidence to pray for our time and place. Erroll referred to past 'Concerts of Prayer' which were followed by extensive revivals and huge missionary expansion. He urged us to plead that the Lord will come to us swiftly.

For the rest of the morning there were three sessions of prayer, interspersed with relevant hymns and Psalms. A number of brothers were called upon to lead in prayer. There were also periods of open intercession, and a time of prayer in small groups.

The prayers were specific. Many different aspects of the one big issue were covered. Two hours flew by. As we approached the stated finishing time, we sensed that we could have gone on praying for a lot longer. We must not be presumptuous, but we are expectant. We trust that God is about to do something significant.

Now we face the question, where do we go from here? We are determined that Saturday March

26th should not be just a one-off 'flash in the pan', but the start of a movement of prayer which we trust will gain momentum, and draw in an even larger body of burdened intercessors. We now seek the Lord's wisdom to know how best to foster this commitment to pray for revival in Yorkshire.

But our concern is not merely parochial. Our prayers that Saturday embraced the Jews, the Muslim countries like Libya and Egypt, afflicted nations like Japan. May the Lord do a mighty work worldwide. May we soon see Satan's strongholds toppling in remarkable ways. May we soon discern a sense of sin. Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit will convince the world of sin, righteousness and judgment (Jn 16:8). May we soon see the fulfilment of Psalm 2:8, 'Ask me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession.'

Jonathan Bayes, March 2011

Postscript – At the monthly YRMF meeting in April it was decided to repeat this call to prayer meeting again at City Evangelical Church in Leeds in June, but for geographic considerations at the same time organising a parallel meeting in North Yorkshire.

Concert of Prayer – guidelines

By way of introduction, What is a Concert of Prayer? The word 'Concert' points to an orchestra. Every member of the orchestra concentrates on precise participation with all the others avoiding every semblance of a discord.

My first point is that we are mindful of our unity as we participate in a Concert of Prayer. We cannot make progress without unity which is 'good and pleasant, – that is where the LORD bestows his blessing' (Ps 133).

Secondly we must pray in humility. 'If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land' (2 Chron 7:14). Also we can be correct in doctrine but lukewarm in heart and need to remember the warning to the church at Ephesus, 'I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If you do not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent' (Rev 2:4-5 ESV).

Under this heading of humility we need to repent and grieve over the secularisation of the UK and the capture of the media by evolutionary humanism. We have sunk to the lowest evils when proven faithful parents are denied the right to continue to foster children because they do not accept homosexuality as normal. This is forcing our consciences against the Bible.

Thirdly our intercession must be in dependence on the Holy Spirit. 'I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication' (Zech 12:10).

Fourthly we must pray for the revival of our churches and church plants.



Dr Jonathan Bayes addressing the fraternal at Escape

Without the outpouring of the Holy Spirit the church plants will not grow. There are church plants at York, Sheffield, Scarborough, Ilkley, Huddersfield, Bradford and Castleford.

Fifthly we must pray for a return of spiritual appetite. The UK leads the world in publishing reliable, biblical, expository reformed books but part of our low spiritual state is seen in the lack of appetite to read and study. Especially we observe this among young Christians.

Sixthly we need to pray within the context of history. Are we being given over to Islam as were Turkey and North Africa? The demise of Bible Christianity in the UK will spell a massive defeat when we remember revivals in the British Isles. Let us recall the 14th - century Lollards, William Tyndale and the 16th - century Reformation, three generations of Puritan leaders, the First Great Awakening, 1735 onwards, the Second Great Awakening following a Concert of Prayer, 1791 and following up to about 1840, the third Great Awakening 1859 and following, and the fourth worldwide phenomena of revivals

from 1900 to 1910 including the 1904 revival in Wales. 600 years of God's mercy! – Is he going to give us up now?

Seventhly we must intercede within the orbit of global Christianity. Philip Jenkins has written a book documenting the extraordinary growth of biblical Christianity in Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa and Asia. For instance Zhejiang province in China with a 51 million population is 19.5 percent Bible-believing Christian. This proportion contrasts starkly with one percent in the UK.

Western Europe is in steep spiritual decline. In the context of the worldwide scene are we to surrender to Satan? Is the story of Christianity a story of gain but then ultimate defeat at the hands of Islam as in Turkey and North Africa? Surely we must pray for revivals in all the nations of Europe.

Eighthly we must pray fervently. The watchmen on the walls of Jerusalem provide us with an example of how we are to pray:

'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).

God appoints humble believers like Simeon and Anna to be his watchmen (Luke 2:34-38). These watchmen believe in the ultimate triumph of the gospel throughout the world. Note how they pray: *ceaselessly* – day and night; *vocally* – are never silent; *effectively* – prayers are ordained to be a vital ingredient in the implementing of God's purpose on earth; *in a disciplined manner* – these watchmen give themselves no rest; *urgently* – until Jerusalem, that is God's cause, is the praise of the earth.

There is reason to believe that when global revival comes it will be as 'life from the

dead' (Rom 11:15). Now we labour under the pall of death. When the Spirit is poured out there will be added meaning to our songs of joy (Ps 126; Isa 35:5-6; John 4:14).

Ninthly we must pray in faith that our prayers will be answered. In this we have the example of our predecessors. Jonathan Edwards called for a Concert of Prayer. He based this call on Zechariah 8:20. 'This is what the LORD Almighty says: "Many peoples and the inhabitants of many cities will yet come, and the inhabitants of one city will go to another and say, Let us go at once to entreat the LORD and seek the LORD Almighty. I myself am going. And many peoples and powerful nations will come to Jerusalem to seek the LORD Almighty and to entreat him." '

His book was posted to John Erskine in Scotland who in turn sent it on to John Ryland in England who shared it with John Sutcliffe. That led to a widespread Concert of Prayer which in turn led to an extensive revival which is documented in Paul Cook's book *Fire from Heaven* (EP).

Perhaps the most outstanding example of how revival has the smallest beginning is seen in the spiritual awakening that began in New York City in 1857. A humble city missionary Jeremiah Lanphier started a lunch-time prayer meeting which in a matter of weeks grew to massive proportions which led in turn to a nationwide spiritual awakening which in turn crossed the Atlantic to spread across Europe.

Tenthly we must pray for swift answers to our intercession. We have been slow in coming together in prayer. In 1978-79 two pastors in Yorkshire tried hard to promote prayer for revival. That effort failed completely. Now we have come together in a Concert of Prayer our fervent longing is for God to work as we read in Isaiah 60:22: 'The least of you will become a thousand, the smallest a mighty nation. I am the LORD; in its time I will do this swiftly' (Isa 60:22).
Editor

True and False Faith

Sam Waldron

It is a wonderful reality that we receive salvation not through the works of the law, but through grace and faith alone. It calls men simply to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved. It teaches that 'it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works so that no-one can boast' (Eph 2:8-9). In this way our God receives the glory.



Sam Waldron

Yet, there is a troubling fact. The Bible also teaches that there is a kind of faith which does not save. Saving faith is conviction of the truth of the gospel. Yet we read of some who believed the gospel who were not saved. Remember Simon the sorcerer? 'But when they believed Philip as he proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptised, both men and women. Simon himself believed and was baptised. And he followed Philip everywhere, astonished by the great signs and miracles he saw' (Acts 8:12-13).

Saving faith is commitment to the Christ of the gospel. Yet we read of some who believed even under Jesus' ministry and yet who were not saved.

'Now while he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Festival, many people saw the signs he was performing and believed in his name. But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all people. He did not need any testimony about mankind, for he knew what was in each' (John 2:23 - 25).

Our very salvation depends on the simple question of whether we truly believe, whether we truly have saving faith. Our assurance of salvation depends on knowing that we have saving faith. There are practical

reasons, there are great reasons, and there are pressing reasons, then, to examine the question before us.

What is the difference between true saving faith and false faith?

There are few questions of greater importance than this. I urge you to give the closest attention to what the Scriptures have to say on this subject. Furthermore, this question is not only important to answer for each of us personally. If we are to be faithful communicators of the gospel to others, we must understand the difference between true and false faith.

The Bible itself gives very clear descriptions of counterfeit faith and how it differs from true faith. I want to show you, first, the fundamental distinction between authentic and counterfeit faith. Then I will explain the threefold differentiation of true faith as opposed to false faith.

I. The Fundamental Distinction

II. The Threefold Differentiation

I. The Fundamental Distinction

The fundamental distinction between authentic and counterfeit faith is that true faith is faith of and from the heart, while false faith is superficial and surface in its character and origin. When I speak of faith of the heart, I am assuming that we are talking about what the Bible means by faith. I assume that we are speaking of that faith which is conviction of the truth of the gospel and commitment to the Christ of the gospel. I am saying that the conviction and commitment which define faith in the Bible must be, if it is to be authentic, a conviction of the heart and a commitment of the heart.

Notice this emphasis in Paul's important description of saving faith in Romans 10:9-10. 'If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.'

Twice Paul stresses here that the faith which saves is a heart faith. It is believing 'in your heart' and 'with the heart'.

A similar emphasis emerges from Jesus' parable of the four soils. In his description of the second soil, we see the importance of the heart. This comes out in Jesus' emphasis that the seed must have deep soil and deep roots and not remain on the surface of a person's soul. Notice the following selections from that parable as found in Matthew 13. 'Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root' (Matt 13:4-5). Jesus explains this: 'The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away' (Matt 13:20-21).

The fourth soil represents those who are truly saved by the gospel. It emphasises the fruitfulness that comes from this fourth soil. This is expressed in Luke 8:15, 'But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop.'

This reminds me of Big Springs in the upper peninsula of Michigan, the state in the USA where I grew up. The Indian name for this spring is Kitchitikiipi. The small lake created by Big Springs is so clear you can see all the way to the bottom – even though it is 40 feet deep. When you take a small raft across the pool, you can actually see the water bubbling up out of the spring at the bottom of the pool. It bubbles up at the rate of 10,000 gallons per minute. The spring at the bottom of this pool is like the heart. It is the true spring of the thoughts, desires, and life of men. From it bubbles up all that makes a man truly who he is.

One might pour water coloured with red dye into Big Springs, but it would quickly return to its original state as the red water flows away and the spring at its bottom continues to fill it with crystal clear water. Just so one may pour the red dye of the gospel into a man's heart and create

a surface and superficial faith, but unless the gospel takes possession of and changes the heart-spring of the person it will not fundamentally change the character of the pool of his life.

True faith has a kind of self-attesting quality to it. The kind of convictions and commitments that are less than whole-hearted do not bring true peace to the person, but when a person finally unconditionally surrenders to Jesus there is a peace and release and confidence that often bubbles up in an immediate assurance that 'Jesus is mine!' True faith is met by God with the Spirit of adoption.

It is needful that I challenge some of you with this. Isn't it true that though you may claim to be a Christian you know deep in your soul that you have never really surrendered your heart to Christ and the gospel. There have been superficial convictions and surface commitments. You have moved toward Christ a little, but you know you have held something back. You have held your deepest self back from entrusting your soul to Christ as Saviour and Lord. Until you give God your heart, you will never be a true Christian.

What are the signs that reveal a heart faith as opposed to a mere surface faith? I will explain this important matter.

II. The Threefold Differentiation

A. True faith is lasting, while false faith is often temporary.

One clear difference between true and false faith is that false faith often fades away, while true faith continues and perseveres. The Bible describes true faith as lasting, while false faith is often temporary and impermanent. The description in Matthew 13 of the second soil stresses this. 'But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away.'

John stresses the necessity of continuing to believe Christ's word as a mark of true faith and discipleship. 'To the Jews who had believed him,

Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:31-32).

Before proceeding to the second mark of true faith, a couple of practical comments need to be made.

First, while true faith always continues, false faith does not always fade completely away. The parable of the soils makes clear that some false believers maintain an outward profession while withering into total unfruitfulness. Merely maintaining a kind of lip-service faith to Jesus is no sure sign of true faith. Remember the third soil in Matthew 13. ‘And the one on whom the seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.’

Second, and following from the first comment, perseverance is not the only (or even by itself a certain) sign of true faith. Though a lack of perseverance is a sign of false faith, mere continuance *in some kind of faith* is not a sign of true faith. What would follow if perseverance were the only sign of true faith? Assurance of salvation would be impossible in this life. You would have to persevere before you could be sure you have true faith. This would make assurance of salvation impossible.

The Baptist Confession of 1689 in chapter 14 brings out the unique and distinctive character of saving faith with the following excellent statement.

This faith, although it be different in degrees, and may be weak or strong, yet it is in the least degree of it different in the kind or nature of it, as is all other saving grace, from the faith and common grace of temporary believers; and therefore, though it may be many times assailed and weakened, yet it gets the victory, growing up in many to the attainment of a full assurance through Christ, who is both the author and finisher of our faith.

Third, if a person’s faith is only temporary and fades away, it is a clear indication that that person never had true faith. The faith of the heart is

always lasting and takes persevering possession of a person's soul. If a faith does not last, that is a sure sign that it is false. A person who gives up the faith never was a true Christian. He only had the false faith against which the Bible warns us.

B. True faith is fruitful, while false faith is dead.

The Bible describes true faith as living, active, and accompanied by other graces, while false faith is lifeless, inactive, and isolated from other graces. Galatians 5:22 describes the fruit of the Spirit as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

James asks if an unfruitful faith can save someone. The answer is clearly No! 'What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.'

A quote from Martin Luther reflects this reality:

Faith is a divine work in us which changes us and makes us to be born anew of God ... It kills the old Adam and makes us altogether different men, in heart and spirit and mind and powers; and it brings with it the Holy Spirit. Oh, it is a living, busy, mighty thing, this faith. It is impossible for it not to be doing good works incessantly.

The problem with Luther saying things like this is that sensitive Christians often can only see and feel their remaining sin and deadness. It is difficult for some Christians to be really objective about the change that has happened in their lives. But may I plead with you to be objective and see what anybody in their right mind looking at you can see? You are not what you want to be, but you are not what you once were. Don't think that you could make the changes that have happened in your life.

Only the saving grace of God working through saving faith could have made these changes. Give God the glory and rejoice in your salvation!

But some of you are or ought to be convicted by this truth that saving faith is active and powerful. Whatever your faith is, it hasn't changed anything basic about you. You can sin and sin and sin, but repent only if some outside force makes you. You have no interest in serving Christ and seeing his name glorified and seeing souls saved. That is a sure sign of a superficial and surface faith and the lack of a heart faith.

C. True faith is universal, while false faith is partial.

The meaning of this heading needs explaining. Perhaps it is a little surprising to you. What do I mean by saying that true faith is universal? What I mean is that true faith has a universal regard for everything Christ says. The indicator of false faith is that it has only a partial respect for Christ's words and does not regard all of Christ's commandments as true and binding. The supposed disciples of John 6 showed such a partial faith.

'On hearing it, many of his disciples said, "This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?"

Aware that his disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them, "Does this offend you? Then what if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before! The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you—they are full of the Spirit and life. Yet there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him. He went on to say, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled them."

From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.

"You do not want to leave too, do you?" Jesus asked the Twelve.

Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God” ’ (John 6:60-69).

True disciples of Christ even though it is difficult listen and follow him in everything he says. Acts 3 speaks of Jesus as the great prophet prophesied to come by Moses. It requires that all the words of this prophet be heeded. Otherwise that person who does not listen to everything he says must have no part with his people.

‘I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their fellow Israelites, and I will put my words in his mouth. He will tell them everything I command him. I myself will call to account anyone who does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name’ (Deut 18:18).

Psalm 119 beautifully illustrates this trait of faith (vv. 6, 13, 66, 80, 86, 101, 104, 128, 160, 172). Note in particular verse 128, ‘And because I consider all your precepts right, I hate every wrong path.’

The universal nature of true faith does not mean that the one who has it lives a perfect life. Far from it! It does mean, however, that the true believer is convinced that everything Jesus said is true and that everything he commanded is to be obeyed. The true believer does not pick and choose between what he likes and what he does not like in Christ’s words and Christ’s doctrines. This means he sincerely endeavours to keep all of Christ’s words and repents whenever he realises he has failed to do so. It means that the word of Christ is final authority about everything for him.

When we observe this reality we note that 40 percent of those in the UK who made a profession of faith while at university now no longer attend church. We note too that some who made a profession turned back when they realised that the Bible does not endorse cohabitation but demands sexual purity. Some from backgrounds of liberal theology have experienced fierce spiritual battles over the doctrine of inerrancy and over creation versus evolution. The difference between true and false

faith is that those with true faith battle through and onwards through their difficulties while those with false faith pick and choose and end up following their own ideas and their own agenda.

The sure mark of false, superficial faith is a stubborn and impenitent refusal to repent of violating what one knows to be Christ's will. It is a stubborn and impenitent refusal to believe anything one knows Christ teaches.

Conclusion

True faith is the faith of the heart. As the faith of the heart it is lasting, fruitful, and universal. False faith is not, and there is a world of difference between authentic and counterfeit faith. The one with a heart conviction of the truth of the gospel and a heart commitment to the Christ of the gospel has the witness of the Spirit of adoption and is marked by the lasting, fruitful, and universal character of his faith.

When we expound this subject immediate sensitivities are aroused. Mr Preacher: "Are you daring to question the validity of my faith?" Hypocrites such as those who defy the commands for a holy life, who live in sin contrary to the gospel, will not tolerate discriminating, searching preaching. In his first sermon in his hometown in Nazareth Jesus aroused fierce opposition and murderous rage. He exposed the fact that the prevalent faith in the synagogue had to do with pride, nationalism and hatred of the Gentiles, rather than with salvation from sin. The hearers rose up and took hold of Jesus to kill him by throwing him over the brow of the hill where their town was built (Luke 4).

But there is another completely different order of hearers. These consist of sensitive believers. The hurting, struggling believer who battles with a lack of assurance will easily conclude that his or her faith is spurious and so fall into depression and inertia. How do the Scriptures anticipate this? The Scriptures universally (contrary to Roman Catholic teaching) use the language of assurance. For example even at his very lowest Job could say, 'I know that my Redeemer lives and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my

flesh I will see God, I myself will see him with my own eyes – I, and not another’ (Job 19:26-27).

Yet there are those who do not enjoy what we call direct assurance which is expressed like this: ‘We know that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit’ (1 John 4:13). See also Romans 8:16, ‘The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.’ Now if I lack this which most Christians enjoy does it mean that my faith is false? Does it mean that I do not have saving faith? Does it mean that I am eternally lost? The answer is No! John in his first letter deals with this problem. He does so with three tests: the doctrinal, the moral and the social tests. John is saying, Do you believe in your heart that Jesus is God? Yes! you say, I do! Well, that is not what the Jehovah’s Witnesses of our day believe. They do not believe that Jesus is the God-man. Then there is the moral test. You are the first to confess that you do not keep God’s commandments as well as you would like to but you certainly love God and carry out his commands however imperfectly that may be (1 John 5:2). That is not the state of unbelievers. The natural man’s mind is hostile to God. ‘It does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so’ (Rom 8:7). And then there is the social test. There is no question. Your preferred company is that of believers. ‘We know’ declares John, ‘that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers’ (1 John 3:14).

The already cited 1689 Confession (ch. 14 para. 3) addresses the fact that there are degrees in faith. Faith may be weak or strong. I cannot enlarge on this subject here. I have set before you the differences between a true faith that can be weak or strong and false faith. No preacher can say everything in one sermon. Especially is this true on saving and spurious faith. Not even our Lord ever attempted to say everything on this subject in one sermon. Rather he commented on different facets of faith. Especially noteworthy is the persistent widow (Luke 18:1-8). She showed her faith by her persistence. She kept going. She did not stop to have an introspection session with herself with the question: Is my faith real? No, she simply persisted. She persevered. That is a sure sign of true faith. It perseveres.

News

Tanzania (45 million)

I left for Tanzania on February 15th of 2011 and returned on March 11th. It takes three days to travel to and from Mbeya so that left me with 19 full days of ministry. In those days the Lord opened the door for me to preach eight times on the radio, twenty-five times in the churches and spend six whole days at Utengule Bible College. There was also the opportunity to lead morning devotions at two other Bible colleges.

A substantial part of my work is distributing books to pastors and Bible College lecturers and students. Banner of Truth, Evangelical Press and Day One publications are generous in donating books to this cause. Many others donated second-hand books of good quality. These books were shipped in a container and all arrived safely. There were about 100 large boxes of English books sent. The contents of these were delivered to six Bible Colleges and sixty-two pastors and lecturers. About half of the books remain safe in storage to be distributed in the future. In addition I had 2,000 books in the Swahili language which came from Grace Baptist Mission in Kenya. I have direct contact with about 250 pastors, teachers and students. As horizons open, the books that remain will be distributed wisely.



Stephen Nowak

My work is predominantly among the Moravian brethren. Tanzania is divided into four provinces and I have only worked within the South-West province until now. There are 187 churches that all have anywhere from 1-20 daughter congregations. There are only 165 full-time pastors at the moment. Much lay preaching takes place every Lord's Day. There are four Bible colleges within this province. I had invitations to work with a Pentecostal group of about thirty churches and inter-denominational colleges.

Within this part of Tanzania there are Lutheran, Anglican, Baptist and many Pentecostal denominations.

An important emphasis is to encourage Christians who can read to cherish their own Bible. Up to 50% of the Christians in the large cities or towns will own a Bible, but in the village churches where there may be

up to 800 members in a church, very few will own a Bible. I have been buying Bibles from the Tanzanian Bible Society at reduced rates and giving them to the pastors to sell to their congregations at subsidised prices. Many Tanzanians are rural farmers and earn very little cash. A Bible could be the equivalent of a month's wages for some.

My soul is stirred by the needs of many orphans and widows. Although there is not large-scale starvation in this part of the world, there are many who are living in poverty. Many children do not go to school, have no medical attention and are undernourished. Many widows will struggle to eat more than once a day. Although our chief concern is to expose church leaders to reformed expository preaching and literature, the lack of Bibles and the burden of poverty is always present.

Moravian pastors earn about £20 a month and those in poor areas get virtually no help from their congregations. This makes it very difficult for them to send their children to school and buy things like uniforms and stationery. I have identified those in greatest need and have set up ways in which we can wisely subsidise their wages.

Very few preachers in this part of Tanzania adequately understand the doctrine of justification by faith alone. The liberalism of the European and American Moravians is beginning to filter into Tanzania and

the lack of discernment that prevails is dangerous. The prosperity gospel is here in force. There is minimal robust biblical and systematic theology around to enable people to defend themselves from these errors. Romans and Galatians would be a mystery to most preachers in this part of the world. I have not met anyone among the Moravians who understands the doctrines of grace. There is an Australian missionary who is reformed. I had some wonderful fellowship with him. He has worked with a wide range of denominations, including Pentecostals, but his teaching against sinless perfection upset the wife of the then General Secretary of the Mbeya Moravians, and for many years that effectively closed the door for him to teach them. With the recent change in leadership he has been welcomed again.

There are hundreds of congregations in need of sound teaching. There are tens of thousands who would call themselves Christians but who have never heard clear preaching on the doctrine of justification. Many by the sovereign grace of God have repented and savingly believed on Christ. Sadly there are many more who are deceived and have a false hope of salvation. The executive committee of the Moravian Church in the South-West province admitted to me that there are unconverted preachers among their ranks.

The European Moravian missionaries began their work in 1891 and the

Lord has saved many through their labours. But the Mbeya region of Tanzania is a part of the world where there is a large percentage of the population going to church but virtually no sound reformed expository preaching. Most of the missionaries are involved in social aspects of the churches' work and there are no missionaries from reformed denominations, missionary agencies or congregations working in the colleges or among the preachers. The one reformed Australian missionary is a lone voice, like a drop in an ocean. Years of surveying members of many different churches have shown him that the famine of sound doctrine has left people with a shaky 'gospel' where, even if you 'get in' through faith alone, you 'stay in' by merit. If a believer dies with some unconfessed sin, he is lost.

The spiritual and physical needs in Tanzania are overwhelming. We must be steadfast and wise stewards as we seek to help.

If you would like to support this work in Tanzania please contact me at stephennowak@btinternet.com

Sudan (43 million)

The new nation of South Sudan recently emerged following a referendum in which 98.82 percent voted in favour of independence. This has brought to an end a decimating civil war which resulted in the death of over two million. In addition to that loss, five million have been internally displaced. What was geographically Africa's largest nation

is now divided into two parts, the North which is predominantly Muslim and the South which is mostly Christian and animist. During the years of conflict the South has been denuded. However 80 percent of Sudan's oil is located in the South. While many believers have left the North because of persecution, others have made the brave decision to stay and strengthen Christian witness in the North.

South Africa (50 million)

From Karl Peterson in Barberton a town in the north-east

I saw a new AIDS statistic today which states that 46% of people in our town are HIV+. That's 10% higher than last year. Our community is dying! Yesterday a few of us went to visit a woman in her 50s in our squatter camp church plant who is HIV+. Her adult daughter, living next door, has completely abandoned her and so our church is doing all we can to help this woman live and die well. One of our sisters is caring for her (feeding and bathing her and administering her medication). She was so weak this morning when I returned to visit that we admitted her to the local hospital. Because her daughter has the reputation of stealing her mother's monthly \$150 pension income, this widow was clutching all the money she owned and sleeping with it under her pillow – \$3.50. The opportunities we have to minister Christ's grace and truth are far more than we have time for. Pray we will be given wisdom.

Ivory Coast (21 million)

A country which has been blessed with stability for many years has suddenly been plunged into chaos. The same jungle roads that were filled with refugees fleeing war in Sierra Leone and Liberia in the 1990s, in search of sanctuary in Ivory Coast, are today operating in reverse. Tens of thousands of Ivorians have fled the country.

In order to protect civilians French military and UN peacekeepers have reluctantly been drawn into combat. A complicating factor is that of wild militia gangs running out of control. The loss of life has yet to be calculated. It seems as though this will be high.

Euopress workers have been hindered in their work of preaching and book distribution. One reports as follows: 'The situation is very reminiscent of the Rwanda genocide, and no one can predict what can happen.'

The tensions keep visits to a minimum. However, besides praying, we need to think ahead as well as it will take many months for any semblance of normality to come back. The selling of books will not be really possible on any scale for a long time. We also need to think what we are going to do to help those in dire straits.

Iran (75 million)

The increase of evangelical believers in Iran continues together with persecution. Many arrests (over 250



Maryam Rostampour and Marzieh Amirizadeh

known to us) have taken place in 33 cities since June 2010. In a recent interview subsequent to their release after 259 days in prison two believers, Maryam Rostampour and Marzieh Amirizadeh, described their experience. While in prison two fellow prisoners were executed. The prayer support and letters to the prisoners were a great encouragement even though most of the letters were intercepted and undelivered. These letters with spiritual content impact the prison officers.

The overall story of the modern church in Iran is one of exceptional growth through house churches. This has been in a climate of severe persecution with the martyrdom of many including foremost leaders such as Hossein Soodmand and Mehdi Dibaj.

Persecution has served to further alienate many from the Islamic regime. The number who have fled Iran now exceeds four million. Iranian churches have multiplied in a number of countries including the UK.

The Gospel in China – 1966-1976

by Bob Davey

Christians and Christianity in China had been exposed to ever-increasing persecution since the birth of the People's Republic of China in 1949. For ten years between 1966-1976 the gospel seemed to outsiders to be entirely uprooted and destroyed in China, under the heel of a militant, ruthless, atheistic state campaign determined on its permanent destruction. It was a criminal offence to hold religious beliefs during this period. There was no institutional church and it was not until April 1979 that any church building was to be reopened anywhere in China.

The Cultural Revolution 1966-1976

The Cultural Revolution (CR) was Mao Zedong's ten-year political and ideological campaign aimed at reviving revolutionary spirit throughout China. Mao was also strengthening his own personal position by unleashing mass action in 1966 against the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) apparatus itself. The CR ended with his death in 1976. It produced a massive social, economic and political upheaval.

Mao's power base was the People's Liberation Army (PLA) controlled by Lin Biao and also the hero-worshipping students. Millions of middle-school and university students were called upon for fervent political demonstrations. In August 1966 no less than 14 million students took part in nine mass rallies in front of Tiananmen Gate in Beijing. These teen-age students became known as the Red Guards. They acted as 'shock troops' for the movement. Mao had an obsessive belief in violence as the transforming power for good in society. His ideas were popularised in the 'Quotations of Chairman Mao' or the Little Red Book as it is popularly known. An all-pervasive cult of Mao's personality took over China. The Little Red Book was to be found everywhere and was freely brandished during demonstrations. The goal was the destruction of the 'Four Olds': the old ideology, the old customs, the old habits, the old culture. Christians and Christian institutions were attacked with violence and humiliated for being part of the old culture and old ideology.

The result of this unfettered criticism of established organs of society by China's exuberant youth was massive civil disorder. This was punctuated by clashes among rival Red Guard gangs and between the Red Guards and local authorities. The party organisation was shattered from top to bottom. Red

Guards terrorised the streets as many ordinary citizens were deemed counter-revolutionaries. Education and public transport came to a halt. The moderates, like Deng Xiaoping, were humiliated and purged as 'capitalist rail-roaders'. The PLA re-established order in 1969 and became the *de facto* political authority in China under Mao. The Red Guards were disbanded and sent to work in the countryside, where most became disillusioned and bitter. Their educational opportunities had been disrupted and lost.

The Cultural Revolution era did not come to an end until the deaths of both the veteran revolutionaries Zhou Enlai and Mao Zedong in 1976. Within a month of the death of Mao Zedong on 9 September 1976 the radical clique most closely associated with him were arrested. The 'Gang of Four', as they were known, included Mao's wife Jiang Qing. There was jubilation in the streets. It has been calculated that 'Maoist Thought' cost the lives of over 70 million during the 27 years of his despotic rule of China. The Gang of Four, with others, were put on trial in a showcase trial in 1978. This represented the final putting to bed of the Cultural Revolution and Maoist Thought. In multitudes disillusionment had set in. Harsh reality and bitter experience had overtaken and destroyed idealism.

The Church of Christ in China 1966-1969

During the worst periods of 1966-1969, when the Red Guards were rampant, believers often had to remain 'hidden', isolated and silent about their faith beyond the confines of the home. Even the home was not safe. The homes of known or suspected Christians were constantly searched and spied upon. Bibles had to be hidden away or divided up. The severity of the persecution sometimes brought even clandestine house church gatherings to a halt, though believers in the countryside would gather together for worship and prayer on hillsides and in caves or wherever they could find reasonable safety from spying eyes. The drive for mutual fellowship among believers could not be denied, and ways and means were found, even if only in small groups or confined to families.

The term 'underground' began to be commonly used to describe the Church in China from this period. Yet even in the darkest of times witness was made by brave testimony and by quality of life.

The strength of character and demeanour of the Chinese Christians spoke many a sermon to observant and thoughtful souls, especially in the burgeoning communes, labour camps and prisons. Witness for Christ was through enquiries, family relationships and close friendship relationships. Fearless witnessing to the gospel by the very brave led to conversions because of the

transparent honesty and joy of their witness, but often led to imprisonment. In prisons, humiliation and torture could not break these valiant hearts and fellow prisoners were converted. Even persecutors at times were made to reflect and finally yield their lives to Christ. What the Communists feared most were the prayers of the Christians. The hotter the persecution, the more fervently the Christians prayed. They prayed with hearts of love for the salvation of their persecutors and for success for the gospel. It was impossible to stop the praying and the caring.

Freed from Western denominationalism and from financial, ecclesiastical and ideological dependence on anyone, believers found that the spiritual character of a Christian community was capable of authentic existence without external organisational structures. It was a question of back to basics in order to survive. This process, though painful and perhaps forced unwillingly upon them, was of immense importance for the future well-being of the gospel in China. The Church would emerge with a truly indigenous voice to its own people.

The Little Flock influence was strong among believers both in the cities and in the countryside. Their focus was on Christian fellowship and prayer, on Scripture study and on small group meetings. Their evangelical doctrinal stance remained unchanged. The emphases continued to be on the direct headship of Christ over each local gathering, separation from sin and the world, and the doctrine of the near approach of the Second Coming of Christ. These distinctives were generally taken on by the house church movement as it emerged.

Radio broadcasting

The Far Eastern Broadcasting Corporation (FEBC) played a part in keeping Christianity alive in China during the dark days of the Cultural Revolution. FEBC broadcast readings of the New Testament in Mandarin Chinese from the Philippines. These could be listened to on both medium and short-wave receivers. These broadcasts sustained faith and were the only means for many Chinese to learn anything about Christianity. The penalty for anyone caught listening to foreign broadcasters was severe. Nevertheless quite a few became Christians through this route.

Around 1970 the Chinese government greatly reduced the price of radios throughout China. This meant many poor country folk could afford to buy them. Many from the remotest corners of China listened to gospel radio programmes from overseas and through them numbers found faith in Christ.

Bibles

The shortage of Bibles in China was acute. There was a major campaign to destroy all Christian literature, especially the Bible. Every Bible that could be found during the Cultural Revolution was destroyed. Anyone found with a Bible was imprisoned. Christians outside of China were acutely aware of the chronic shortage of Bibles in China. In the early 1970s overseas Chinese Christians visiting relatives within China would smuggle a few copies of the Bible into China in their luggage.

An early sign of revival, Henan province, 1966-1970

Tony Lambert cites at length the report given him by a house church leader of how the gospel not only survived but flourished in Henan province during these dark days of the Cultural Revolution. 'In the late 1960s the arm of the Lord was revealed in the villages of Henan. There were countless villages where meetings sprang up almost simultaneously. This was virtually unthinkable, as believers were under constant surveillance and even exchanging a few words of Christian comfort between friends, if overheard, could lead to political persecution. The dictatorship of the proletariat was extremely effective in repressing Christians. Yet God was able to work even within the system. When the wives of Communist cadres fell ill, they sought out medical help, even visiting doctors in Beijing, but often to no avail. So, many of these women came home to Henan to die. In the villages there were many elderly Christian women who had not been able to go to church for nearly twenty years. Although all their Bibles had been confiscated they were still strong in faith and knew how to pray. They went into the homes of these Communist cadres and production brigade secretaries bringing the love of Christ and preaching Jesus, the Great Healer. Many of those women received Christ as their Saviour. Those that recovered from illness asked for further instruction from those elderly Christian women who were simple peasants. So many meetings actually started in the homes of local Communist cadres!'

During this period there were mass conversions in the villages of Henan, conversions of Communist Party cadres, genuine healings in answer to prayers, and there were many other instances of remarkable providences in answers to prayer in the difficult circumstances of life. God was very real and very close. All this was happening away from the limelight of any publicity or campaign. It was the Sovereign Lord pouring out his Holy Spirit in a way that no man should get the glory. It was the first-fruits of the wide harvest to come.

The gospel in China 1970-1976

The ideas of Mao Zedong were increasingly being questioned. A spiritual vacuum was left in the hearts of many millions of people because of their

disillusionment with Communism. This spiritual vacuum opened the door for the gospel, with its message of personal value and hope, even during the days of the Cultural Revolution itself! Thus we can understand how it could happen that there were conversions even in the darkest times of repression. And there *were* conversions to Christ. And not just a few either. By the power of the Holy Spirit a genuine revival was taking root in parts of China during this period and the house church movement rapidly developed under dedicated leadership.

Shanghai

A Hong Kong Christian visited Shanghai for a month in the winter of 1973 to find that the house churches were already growing. Many meetings of up to thirty or forty people were held in homes in China's largest city and sometimes they met quietly in corners of parks. Great care had to be taken with security and introduction of new members. Passages of Scripture would be copied and distributed because of shortages of Bibles and the risk of being caught taking them to meetings. The chosen passage would be studied verse by verse. Hymns, often of their own composition, would be sung very quietly and to Chinese folk-tunes to avoid suspicion. Great emphasis was made on prayer with the focus on their own growth in grace, for imprisoned Christians and for greater freedom to preach the gospel. Prayer would be by the leader, or by turn, or all together very quietly.

Wenzhou

In 1974 Hong Kong Christians were taking advantage of the new freedom to visit relatives in the Wenzhou area in the coastal province of Zhejiang. On their return to Hong Kong stories circulated that there were 50,000 active Christians in the Wenzhou area. These stories turned out to be true. The power of the gospel had been sealed by God in a remarkable way. One of the house church leaders explained, 'We never stopped meeting (during the Cultural Revolution). The China Inland Mission had laid a good foundation here. The old Christians knew how to pray.' This had been supplemented by determination to continue to evangelise on the personal level. David Aikman adds, 'Wenzhou had a good foundation for growth from the Cultural Revolution onward because the biblical and theological teaching by the city's most evangelical pastors had been very thorough before 1949 and continued to be so even when the Cultural Revolution forced all Christian teaching to go underground.'

It was in this way that the Church grew in city and countryside. It was an overwhelmingly grass-roots lay-movement which adapted itself to local

conditions and ordinary people and was overwhelmingly orthodox evangelical. As 'the old Christians knew how to pray', so did the new ones.

Fangcheng house church movement, Henan

Fangcheng County of Henan province is in the heartland of ancient China. In 1974 a remarkable event took place in a village there. The authorities got wind of a secret meeting for training Christians. They broke it up and arrested almost all of the 4000 attending! Where had all these Christians come from? They were the fruit of the revival already in progress in Henan.

The story begins in the 1940s when a captain in Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist Army named Gao Yongjiu was converted and became a zealous and effective local evangelist in his native Fangcheng County. He was brother-in-law to Li Tianen. When Li Tianen (b.1928) was released from prison in 1970 he agreed to help with the rapidly expanding work in Fangcheng County. Li travelled through Henan training a new generation of Christian leaders from the network of itinerant evangelists and preachers. These were constantly on the move and were ministering to the rapidly growing number of Christians in the revival already in progress. By this time the work stretched right across Henan into adjacent provinces. David Aikman comments, 'It is difficult to overestimate the part Li played in training the next generation of China's Christian leaders. It was his dedicated training and travelling that helped raise an entirely new generation of "uncles", the current leaders of China's largest house church networks. Li often lived in the home of fellow Christian workers, training up to twenty young people at a time.' Li was to train Zhang Rongliang, the most influential of the current leaders of the Church in China, the man behind the Confession of Faith of 1998.

After the arrest of the 4000 from the secret training meeting, Li Tianen became the prime target of the authorities, was arrested in 1975, and sentenced to death. He was transferred to a prison in Zhengzhou and put on death row. A huge flood in Henan forced postponement of the execution. The new date set was for the spring of 1976 but this too had to be postponed because of infighting in the Communist Party in Henan, after the death of Chou Enlai in January 1976.

After Mao Zedong's death later in 1976 and the arrest of the 'Gang of Four' Communist Party cadres were scared of being labelled 'leftists' or followers of the 'Gang of Four' so a process of 'reversing verdicts' began in earnest. Outright persecution of Christians ceased for a time. As a result of this Li Tianen's sentence was reduced and along with many other Christian leaders across China he was released in 1979. All charges against him were dropped.

1976 marked a watershed for the gospel in China.

South-West China

Lisu people

With the coming of the Communists, the churches of the 15,000 strong Lisu Church were closed and the pastors imprisoned. Many Lisu believers fled across the mountains into nearby Burma. For two decades all seemed lost. Then one elderly Lisu evangelist was released from labour camp in the early 1970s. He began to preach the gospel along the banks of the Salween (Nu, Nujian) river, close to the border of Burma. Revival broke out among the Lisu people. Not only were many believers restored but the work went on from strength to strength. By the end of the decade it was reckoned that the number of believers was over 30,000. This was but the beginning.

Miao people in Yunnan province

On 10 July 1998 Queen Elizabeth II attended a service in Westminster Abbey, London, to commemorate ten Christian martyrs of the twentieth century. One of the ten statues unveiled above the Great West Door was of the Chinese martyr Wang Zhiming.

Pastor Wang Zhiming (1907-1973) was a Miao Christian who became the leader and martyr of the strong Miao Church in Yunnan province that had continued to develop from the days of the pioneering missionary work of Samuel Pollard and Arthur Nicholls. Wang Zhiming was born in 1907 in Wuding, Yunnan, the year after Arthur Nicholls started his work there. Wang was educated in Christian schools (there were no other for Miaos) and later taught in one for ten years. Wang was elected chairman of the church council of Wuding in 1944. In 1951 Wang was ordained pastor in Kunming, capital of Yunnan province at the age of 44. He served the church in Sapushan. He also signed the Three-Self Manifesto but refused to be a party to denunciation meetings. In 1955 he was received by Mao Zedong in Beijing.

With the onset of the Cultural Revolution the Miao churches were closed and 'cultural centres' were set up to indoctrinate Miao believers into atheism. In 1969 Pastor Wang was labelled as a counter-revolutionary and was arrested and imprisoned with at least twenty other Christian leaders. Many other Liao Christians were sent to labour camps during the days of the Cultural Revolution. On 29 December 1973 Wang Zhiming was executed at a mass rally of more than 10,000 people. The largely Christian crowd was not cowed into submission by the spectacle but rather rushed the platform and berated the

prosecuting officials. Wang Zhiming became the only Christian martyr of the Cultural Revolution to have an official monument erected at his grave site (in 1981). The Church multiplied.

Miao people in Guizhou province

By 1965 there was a flourishing house church movement among the Miao people. In Weining alone at that time there were twenty times the number of independent preachers than the officially ordained preachers. During the Cultural Revolution the message of the Miao Christians was, 'The more you forbid Christianity, the more we will cling to the Church. If you confiscate our churches, we will worship in caves. If you announce the extermination of the Church, we will develop even more secret meetings. If you attack ordained pastors, we will use even more independent house church preachers instead. If you take action against us on Sundays, we will multiply our meetings to every day of the week and into the night.'

'Zhang Youxue and his relative Yang Derong, a China Inland Mission evangelist from Hezhang, went to Stone Gateway to evangelise. The commune held a struggle-accusation meeting against them. Afterwards Zhang was forced to commit suicide. His two sons Zhang Mincai and Zhang Mincan jumped into a river and also committed suicide. This incident caused masses of the Miao people to return to the Church.' This was the account of a Mainland Chinese researcher in 1979.

All this was only the beginning of the revival in China. During the next twenty-five years, to the end of the twentieth century, China was to experience one of the most extensive revivals in the whole history of the Church.

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Roman Catholicism

A review article

Catholicism : East of Eden

Insights into Catholicism for
the 21st Century

Richard Bennett,
Banner of Truth, paperback,
311 pages



*Richard Bennett in his days of the
priesthood seen here at an ordination
service*

Richard Bennett begins his book with an autobiography. Born into a devout RC family he spent eight years in theological training for the priesthood. He was assigned to the West Indies where he spent 21 years serving in Trinidad as a parish priest. After a life-threatening accident he began an earnest study of the Bible. This led to 14 years contrasting Roman Catholic doctrine and practice with the Scriptures. Following and during this time he was converted. In 1986 he formally left the RC Church. He subsequently founded an evangelistic ministry called Berean Beacon www.bereanbeacon.org

First-hand experience provides added authority to this study which traverses the following subjects: the authority of Scripture compared with the authority of tradition; paedophile abuse by priests; the homosexual subculture of the priesthood; the evils of imposed celibacy; the rise and history of papal Rome; 600 years of the Inquisition; the response of the papacy to the Reformation; the record of the papacy during the Second World War; baptismal regeneration; *for 21 years I baptised an average of 30 babies a month. I assured the mothers and godparents that their children were now children of God*, (p. 109); the evils of the Confession Box; *it was like being in a garbage pit where garbage had been thrown over me until I was nearly succumbing under the sheer weight of the knowledge of sin that had fallen on me* (p. 124); the Mass as a Sacrifice; the obligation to worship the bread as the literal body of Christ. The author is excellent in refuting transubstantiation referring to the text, 'The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life' (John 6:63). Rome gives official approval to mystical tradition which is the practice of mysticism in seeking to

gain ultimate knowledge of God by direct experience that bypasses the Bible and the mind. 'Dramatised mysticism' is practised by Kenneth Copeland and Kenneth Hagin. 'Paul Crouch, Benny Hinn, Charles Capps, Robert Tilton, Paul Yonggi Cho, Marilyn Hickey, Morris Cerullo, T L Osborn and Jerry Savelle promote stage-managed mysticism' (p. 179).

Richard Bennett devotes pages 201 to 222 to the subject of the elevation of Mary to the state of Godhood. He traces out the parallels of Mary to Christ and to the Holy Spirit. The doctrines that have been invented to support this have come by stages through history, the last being in 1950 with the claim that Mary was assumed body and soul into heaven. Mary has been declared Mediatrix which means that she is given omniscience in order to mediate the prayers made to her. Rome exalts Mary to the place of Christ in calling her 'the All-Holy One' who is sinless, able to bestow grace and salvation, also to mediate and intercede. The worship of Mary as though she is God by the recent Pope John Paul II is documented (p. 202). These anti-biblical heresies concerning Mary highlight the tragedy of a truly apostate religion.

There follows a discussion of the doctrine of marriage and the claims of Rome to control marriage laws. One out of two Roman Catholic marriages in the USA ends in divorce, with one out of five officially annulled by the Church (decreeing that the marriage was never valid). The author brings us up to date with ecumenism and the role of Evangelicals and Catholics Together (ECT).

The sub-title of the volume reads *Insights into Catholicism for the 21st Century*. This is a work of insights. Richard Bennett does not attempt to be comprehensive as Lorraine Boettner is in his *magnum opus*, *Roman Catholicism* (1962). He omits forbidding the cup to the laity, purgatory, indulgences, saints, relics, pilgrimages, prayers for the dead and rosaries.

The author writes out of his deeply personal experience and has succeeded in maintaining the clearest distinction between the way of salvation revealed in Scripture and that taught by the Roman Church. His writing is not bitter to the taste. It is pastoral in style and is commended to be placed in the hands of Roman Catholics.

Reviewers have criticised Richard Bennett for using 19th-century popular works that have been superseded. While the Waldensians and Hussites were biblical the orthodoxy of the Albigensians and Paulicians is disputed. I believe that the older writers had the advantage of living nearer the events they narrate. We should study Harold O J Brown's work *Heresies* (Hendrickson, 2003) and George H Williams' *The Radical Reformation* (Westminster Press, 1961). For more recent history John Cornwell's *Hitler's Pope – the Secret*

History of Pius XII. (Viking, 1999) is important. Even if the Albigensians were not always orthodox or if they were in error, that does not give license to kill them. The Great Commission reads, 'Therefore go and make disciples of all nations,' not 'Go and force everyone by threat of death to conform.'

Richard Bennett is energetic and powerful in unveiling the fact that the Roman Catholic Church is in a continual state of regression. Its claim of infallibility insulates it against repentance and reformation.

A deep impression made on me is that the Popes who claim to represent Christ on earth were responsible over a period of six hundred years for the deaths of fifty million who refused to embrace the heresies of Rome. We must not imagine that Rome has become less devious. Hitler was baptised into the Catholic Church in Austria and served as an altar boy (p. 80) and to the day of his suicide remained Catholic. Pope Pius XII (Pacelli), a cardinal and leader of the RC Church in Germany from 1933 to 1939 was culpably compromised with Hitler. Mussolini, Franco, Salazar, Dollfus and Peron were baptised into the Catholic Church as was Anton Pavelic of Croatia. The modern inquisition in Croatia (1941 to 1945) was led by Pavelic and Archbishop Alois Stepinac. These grisly monsters ruthlessly pursued a 'convert or die' policy toward 900,000 Greek Orthodox Serbs, Jews and others in Croatia. 200,000 converted. 700,000 chose to die and were tortured, burned, buried alive, or shot after digging their own graves (p. 81).

Four brief appendices add value to the book. Appendix One opens up the sole authority of Scripture as against tradition. Appendix Two is about the Apocrypha while the third is about the nature of the true Church and Appendix Four consists of columns comparing biblical truth with Romish deviations. Indices would greatly enhance the volume.

Former Roman Catholic priest Richard Bennett concludes his treatise with the most important subject, 'How can I be saved?' He reminds us that the early Church lost its way by turning to rituals and the idea that spiritual regenerating power is conveyed through the physical means like the water of baptism and that spiritual renewal is given by eating physical bread. Justification is by faith alone and by grace alone. This teaching was lost in the Roman Church with disastrous consequences.

Richard Bennett is not alone in his escape from Rome. He and Martin Buckingham have edited a book published by the Banner of Truth with the title *Far From Rome, Near to God* (362 pages paperback) consisting of the testimonies of fifty converted Roman Catholic priests. Editor

Liberalism – a tsunami!

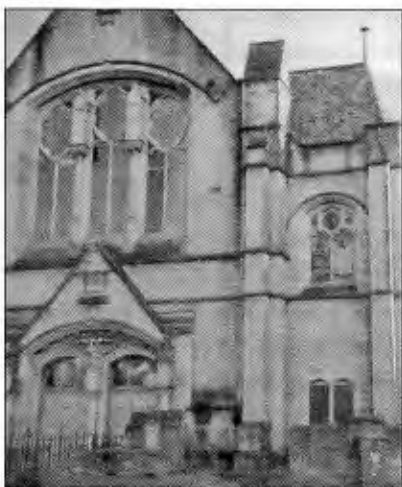
John J Murray

If we are to have a proper understanding of the change that took place in the history of the Christian Church in the United Kingdom and in other parts of the world, during the middle decades of the twentieth century, we need to understand the state of Christianity in the first half of that century.

The Rise of Liberalism in the 19th Century

By the end of the nineteenth century it was clear that a wind of change was blowing through the Protestant Churches of the United Kingdom. This was due to the spread of Higher Criticism in the theological colleges of the land. This teaching had its origins in the universities of Germany in the 1860s. It was the accepted practice for students from the UK who aspired to advancement in academic circles to do specialist studies there. The change that came about in theological thought was justified in the name of progress and of biblical scholarship. Those scholars affected did not reject the Bible totally but they believed that the new light and new understanding given to them required that modifications should be made in the message of the Church in order to win the approval of the majority. By doing this they thought that the Church would command greater influence in the world.

This proved to be a disastrous change and a significant turning point in Church history. Some saw the danger signals and warned their contemporaries. Chief among them was the great Baptist preacher, C H Spurgeon (1834-92) who fought a rearguard action in what became known as ‘the Downgrade Controversy’. He resigned from the Baptist Union over the liberal teaching that had infiltrated the denomination. Towards the end of his life he was regarded as ‘the last of the Puritans’. In his address to the annual conference of the Pastors’ College in 1889 he declared: ‘What is being done today will affect the next centuries, unless the Lord should very speedily come... For my part, I am quite willing to be eaten of dogs for the next fifty years; but the more distant future will vindicate me.’ It is interesting to compare Spurgeon’s prophetic words with that of one of the prominent liberal theologians, Dr Marcus Dods of New College, Edinburgh. In a letter to a friend on 8 January 1902 he wrote: ‘I wish I could live as a spectator through the next generation to see what they are going to make of things. There will be a grand turn up in matters theological. The churches won’t know themselves fifty years hence. It is to be hoped some little rag of faith may be left when all’s done. For my own part I am sometimes entirely under water and see no sky at all.’



Westgate Baptist Church, Bradford, was built to accommodate 900. Tremendous times of blessing were experienced under the ministry of William Steadman (1764-1837), a Calvinistic Baptist, (see biography by Sharon James, RT 161). Over the years the church joined the Baptist Union. The membership has shrunk to forty-two members. In 1912 the Yorkshire Baptist Association recorded 23,091 members. This year the total membership stands at 5,140. Liberal theology has invaded the Baptist Union and continues unchecked. This accounts for the decline. When the Bible is undermined the Holy Spirit departs.

Liberalism led to the dismantling of much of historic Christianity by the turn of the twentieth century. Whatever show of scholarship it may have presented, there is no doubt that liberalism was just disguised unbelief. It undermined belief in the supernatural, and presented the Church with a God who was no longer regarded as transcendent. The essence of the true biblical faith, rediscovered at the time of the Protestant Reformation, was enshrined in the historic Confessions of Faith and catechisms of the Reformation and Puritan eras. Although some could not claim to call themselves 'Reformed' in the historic sense of that word, they would nevertheless hold to the Biblical faith in what is known as the 'Calvinistic' or 'free grace' doctrines. B B Warfield was right to claim that 'the central fact of Calvinism is the vision of God' and 'its determining principle is zeal for the divine honour'. 'It begins, it centres and it ends with the vision of God in his glory and it sets itself, before all things, to render God his rights in every sphere of life-activity....It is the vision of God and His Majesty, in a word, which lies at the foundation of the entirety of Calvinistic thinking.' It is truly the echo of that Scripture which declares: 'For of him and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever' (Rom 11.36).

If the Reformed Faith is Christianity seen in terms of giving all the glory to God, then liberalism, in essence, is 'Christianity' harmonised with the religious aspirations of men and giving the glory to man. Liberalism made Christianity man-centred. It assumed the goodness of human nature and portrayed Christianity in terms of 'doing' rather than believing, of achieving rather than receiving. It looked chiefly to the human level and saw the business of religion chiefly as the support of people. It was truth modified to give offence to none. The liberals surrendered doctrine in favour of 'life'.

The Influence of Liberalism in Universities and Colleges

The emergence of Christian Unions in the English universities was a feature of the last quarter of the 19th century. The first to be founded was the Cambridge Inter-Collegiate Christian Union (CICCU) in 1877. Among the factors that gave impetus to the rise of others were the missions of the American evangelist, D L Moody, in 1882 and the 'Cambridge Seven' in 1884. On 15th October 1889 a 'Missionary Convention for Young Men' took place in the Metropolitan Tabernacle, London with C H Spurgeon in the chair. 'Over 1,500 students attended it with much enthusiasm. At the close of the convention one hundred and fifty-two London students signed the declaration that "It is my earnest hope if God permit to engage in foreign missionary work" '. Out of this grew the Student Volunteer Missionary Union (SVMU), inaugurated in 1892. The following year the British Colleges Christian Union was established and began to hold joint conferences with the SVMU. These groups were part of what soon came to be known as the Student Christian Movement (SCM).

During the early years of the 20th century the influential elements in the SCM grew more committed to an open basis of belief that permitted all theological viewpoints. In 1910 CICCU dissociated from the rest of the SCM on doctrinal grounds. By the outbreak of the First World War the great student movement known as SCM had become a very uncomfortable place for Evangelicals to work in. The tragedy of war further heightened their sense of crisis. By the end of World War I the main emphases in the SCM were no longer the earlier biblical ones. Professor A Rendle Short, commenting on the state of Christianity in English universities, believed that before 1914 'the situation was disquieting, almost calamitous, except at Cambridge, and at a few London medical schools... The real message of the gospel of forgiveness of sins in virtue of our Lord's atoning death had almost died out in the provincial universities.'

As the century wore on there were very few Conservative evangelical scholars to be found teaching in the universities and colleges and evangelical students were frequently subjected to ridicule by fellow students and often by their tutors. To quote Professor Short again: 'The idea has got abroad that men of learning, and especially the scientists, have made the Bible impossible of belief for anyone with a modern education.' Few came out of their theological education unscathed. Dr T Glover writing in *The Times* in 1932 rejoiced in the change that had taken place and wrote: 'Today if you want a real old obscurantist college, you have to found one.'

Effect of Liberalism in the Churches

The established denominations were going adrift in the direction of their leaders. The prevailing view was that no matter how much of the Bible was rejected by scholars, the essence of Christianity remained unaffected. After all, it was said, 'Christianity is a life not a doctrine.' This was the spirit that came to prevail in the churches. In 1907 a Congregational minister, R J Campbell, published a book entitled, *The New Theology*. Influenced by the so-called 'new science' and especially by evolutionary theories, he expounded an almost pantheistic concept of God, denied the uniqueness of the incarnation and repudiated the miraculous. Many leaders in the Church who held critical views of the Bible still spoke in the devotional language of the old gospel truths that they had learned in childhood. The people in the pews did not apprehend the dangers. Too many of them erred on the side of a false charity.

S M Houghton, writing of the Methodism in which he was reared in the 1920s, said: 'The church into which I was born was largely given over to modern thought in its colleges and in its pulpits. Lord Tennyson, in his day, might sing of ringing in the true and ringing out the false, but the ringers of Methodism were 'ringing the changes' by abandoning the Biblical doctrines to a large extent and welcoming doctrines 'which their fathers knew not'. Yet as a tyro I was convinced that Wesleyan Methodism was Christian to a high degree. In fact all that could be desired of a Christian church.'

During these years conservative Evangelicals in the denominations became more unpopular with the established leaders and were increasingly isolated. Like C H Spurgeon they found it difficult to take effective action within their denominations. Their main recourse was to support one another in fellowships and societies that stood four-square on the authority of Scripture. But in withdrawing from the contemporary religious scene, the danger for Evangelicals was to live in a non-intellectual world of their own. They became wary of theology, partly because so many young Evangelical students seemed to lose their distinctive beliefs when they studied at university or college.

Following the visit of D L Moody to the UK in the 1870s the outlook of Evangelicals in the UK was dominated by campaign-type evangelism and Arminianism. Nevertheless the evangelicalism that prevailed throughout the first half of the 20th century retained the essentials of the gospel. It believed that men's souls are lost, that conversion is an indispensable necessity, that separation from the world and holiness of life should characterise the Christian. But increasingly there was less emphasis upon doctrine and less attention paid to historic Christianity. An appreciation of the place of Church history was almost non-existent. The Reformers and the Puritans were practically forgotten. The vision of God in his glory was rapidly disappearing from view and thinking in the Church became more and more man-centred.

Scarcity of Evangelical Literature

The decline in appreciation of the Reformed heritage was reflected in the Christian literary world. When we look back to the previous century and consider the influence that the writings of the Puritans had on C H Spurgeon and the manner in which he promoted them, it was clear that a sad change had set in. It was the discovery of a library that had been preserved for almost 200 years that introduced young Spurgeon to the riches of Puritan literature. In the manse adjoining the old Meeting House at Stambourne he found the minister's study – the window of which which had been blocked up through the window duty (tax). 'In my time it was a dark den – but *it contained books* and this made it a gold mine to me....here I first struck up acquaintance with the martyrs and especially with "Old Bonner" who burned them; next with Bunyan and his "Pilgrim"; and further with the great Masters of Scriptural theology, with whom no moderns are worthy to be named in the same day'. The sermons and writings of Spurgeon showed just what an effect these writings had on him and what an influence he had in the republication and promotion of the works of the Puritans during his life.

In the early decades of the 20th century the state of Christianity could be gauged by the decline of interest in the Christian classics, especially the Puritan writings, and by the type of literature that was becoming increasingly popular. At the time of the First World War Puritan books were often thrown out for salvage. It has been said that £12 a ton was the going price for unwanted books. Between the two World Wars demand for the older Christian books scarcely existed. John Stott could write: 'When I was an undergraduate at Cambridge University in the early 1940s (a vulnerable and immature evangelical believer, beleaguered by liberal theologians) there was no evangelical literature available to help me. In those days one had to ransack second-hand booksellers for volumes like A H Finn's *The Unity of the Pentateuch*, James Orr's *The Problem of the Old Testament*, R W Dale on *The Atonement* or works of the Princeton divines. But there was virtually no contemporary evangelical theology and IVP had not yet come into existence.'

It was about this time that the writings of C S Lewis on the Christian faith began to fill a gap. In 1933 he had written *The Pilgrim's Regress*, which is partly autobiographical and an allegory about one route to the Christian faith. A publisher who liked it asked Lewis to write a book on suffering which resulted in *The Problem of Pain*. It was admired by the BBC Director of Religious Broadcasting, who invited Lewis to give some radio talks. Lewis agreed that ordinary British people needed to hear what Christianity really is in language that they could understand. His aim was evangelistic and he gave a series of three talks and each was published in turn in *Broadcast Talks*

(1942); *Christian Behaviour* (1943) and *Beyond Personality* (1944). These three were later put together and revised by Lewis to form one of his most famous books, *Mere Christianity* (1952).

Resistance to Liberalism

The Protestant liberalism that prevailed for some forty years was given a setback by the social upheaval of the First World War and by the rise of neo-orthodoxy. The theological shift was led by Karl Barth, who chastised the liberals for making God after their own experiential image – God had become a liberal nine feet tall! Barth went back to the Bible and discovered that the Scripture is all about God in his own absolute ‘Godness’. The new insights he had discovered were given to the world, particularly in his *Commentary on Romans*, published in 1918. Sadly, Barth although shifting the focus back to God, failed to re-affirm the truth of the absolute authority of the Bible as the Word of God. The resulting Barthianism, or neo-orthodoxy as it was called, was a false dawn that led many people further astray.

In the United States there was an early reaction to liberalism. A series of tracts for the times began to appear in 1909. Their publication was financed by two wealthy brothers called Lyman and Milton Stewart. There were sixty-five booklets in the series and millions of copies were sold. They were entitled *The Fundamentals* and covered such themes as the inspiration and authority of Scripture, the deity of Christ, his virgin birth and bodily resurrection, the Holy Spirit, sin, judgment, atonement, justification and regeneration. They were written in order for ministers of the gospel, missionaries, Sunday School superintendents, etc. to have at their disposal articles which would be useful in affirming and reaffirming the fundamental truths of Christianity. The authors were drawn from North America and Britain and included such well-known Evangelicals as B B Warfield, R A Torrey, A T Pierson, J C Ryle, Handley Moule and Campbell Morgan. However, the Fundamentalist Movement was not entirely a continuation of historic evangelical Christianity. Many of the leaders adopted the Premillennial and Dispensationalist view of Scripture and this was often regarded by them as a fundamental article of the faith.

What proved to be the more orthodox re-affirmation of the historic Christian faith came through the testimony to the truth by J Gresham Machen. Trained at Princeton Theological Seminary, under B B Warfield, he did further studies in universities in Germany, and at Marburg was shaken in his faith for a time under the influence of the liberal theologian, Wilhelm Herrmann. Machen’s testing in the German crucible proved to be the tempering of the steel in his character so that he would emerge later as a champion of orthodoxy. By 1925

he published his benchmark book entitled, *Christianity and Liberalism*, in which he argued that Christianity and liberalism are two distinct religions. This led to a confrontation within Princeton Seminary and in the Presbyterian Church in the USA (PCUSA). In 1929 when PCUSA reorganised Princeton to ensure a more inclusive theological spectrum, Machen and others withdrew and founded Westminster Theological Seminary at Philadelphia. The battle within the denomination continued and the crisis came to a head in 1935 when Machen was defrocked and the following year lost his appeal. He played the central role in the founding of a new denomination, named the Presbyterian Church of America, then renamed the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in 1939, as a result of a lawsuit.

It was in the year 1929, which proved a watershed in the USA, that an initiative was taken in the United Kingdom to counteract liberalism and neo-orthodoxy. One of the few colleges not affected by liberalism was the Free Church of Scotland College in Edinburgh. Two of the professors from that faculty, Dr John R Mackay and Dr Donald MacLean, launched the *Evangelical Quarterly* in January 1929. The journal was an attempt to articulate the historic Christian faith in the face of the threats that were arising, especially from neo-orthodoxy. They sought to rally Reformed men from around the world to this cause. The main contributors outside the UK were to come from Holland and North America.

In the first issue the challenge of expounding the basic principles of the Reformed Faith was given to Caspar Wistar Hodge of Princeton Theological Seminary, grandson of the great Charles Hodge. He gives a sober assessment of the situation:

‘Doubtless this Reformed Faith is suffering a decline in the theological world today. What has been termed “Reformed spring-time in Germany” we cannot regard as the legitimate daughter of the classical Reformed Faith. In Scotland the names of William Cunningham and Thomas Crawford no longer exert the influence we wish they did. In America the influence of Charles Hodge, Robin Breckinridge, James Thornwell, Robert Dabney, William G T Shedd and Benjamin Warfield, seems largely to have vanished.’

The substance of this article forms the first chapter of the book Catch the Vision by J J Murray published by Evangelical Press. The references are omitted here. Readers are encouraged to obtain Catch the Vision which traces the recovery of the Reformed Faith in the 1960s and thereafter.

For comments on the use of the word ‘tsunami’ see editorial.

Book Reviews

The Victory of Reason: How Christianity led to Freedom, Capitalism and Western Success

Rodney Stark,

Random House, New York, 278 pages,
paperback, 2005.

Rodney Stark is a sociologist who has published a number of books aiming to refute the notion that Christianity has, historically, impeded progress and scientific advance. For many years Stark professed to be agnostic. More recently, he has moved to an affirmation of Christian faith, and at present he lectures at Baylor University, Texas (a Baptist foundation).

The Victory of Reason argues that 'The success of the West, including the rise of science, rested entirely on religious foundations, and the people who brought it about were devout Christians'. It has often been suggested that the scientific revolution arose only after belief in religious and clerical authority had been discredited during the 'Enlightenment'. Stark seeks, by contrast, to demonstrate that faith in human reason is intrinsic to Christian thought. Christianity teaches that God, the supremely rational being, has created mankind in his image. He has placed mankind in an ordered and coherent world, with the task of stewarding and managing its resources, using the God-given gift of reason and logic.

To make his point, Stark appears to dismiss the achievements of the pre-Christian classical world in too summary a fashion. But he provides a fascinating account of the development of

free-market enterprise, agricultural innovation and scientific experimentation on the monastic estates that spread throughout Western Europe after the ninth century. He describes the development of water-wheels, fish farms, horseshoes, three-field crop-rotation and eyeglasses, convincingly arguing that the 'Dark Ages' is a misnomer for the period between the fall of the Roman Empire and the Renaissance. Economic development was a necessary pre-requisite for improved living standards, but was only possible because Christian theologians such as Augustine and Thomas Aquinas were willing to sanction the possession of private property and the pursuit of profit (and the charging of interest). The description of the development of the northern Italian city-states and the powerful Italian banks which serviced the rise of capitalism in Northern Europe as well is fascinating. These developments rested on the foundation of rigorous schooling.

The main thesis of the book is that the economic and political freedoms which we value in the West today rest on the foundation of a belief in reason, which in turn rested on the foundation of Christianity. As Stark looks to the future, and whether such developments will characterise Asia, Africa and South America, he suggests that much will depend on whether Christianity continues to advance in those areas.

This is a valuable piece of revisionist history. For too long many historians have been content to repeat the argument that Christianity was essentially hostile to scientific progress. And too many

Christians seem content to assume that wealth-creation is necessarily worldly, and that capitalism is fundamentally sub-Christian. This book is a reminder that Christians should be committed to all aspects of fulfilling the creation mandate. Political freedom is an ideal that has arisen from the Christian conviction that all human beings are made in the image of God. The ideal of universal education necessarily follows, to ensure that each person made in God's image can fulfil their God-given potential. Christianity has lain behind many of the developments which have led to economic and scientific progress. Stark may overstate his case in some places, but overall this is an enjoyable and stimulating challenge to what has too often been a stiflingly anti-Christian approach to our past.

Sharon James

Indeed, has Paul really said?

A critique of N T Wright's teaching on justification

Michael John Beasley

Published by the Armoury Ministries

148 pages, 2008.

It was Martin Luther who said that the doctrine of justification by faith 'is the doctrine by which the church stands or falls'. This is not a review but a book notice to point to this useful resource for those who might still be confused by the teachings of N T Wright. Michael Beasley concentrates on the biblical meaning of righteousness: 1. A lexical analysis, 2. The forensic context of justification by imputed righteousness, 3. Paul's apostleship, 4. The righteousness of Christ within the orbit of the counsel of God.

This work stands well alongside John Piper's book *The Future of Justification* (Crossway and IFP, 240 pages). *Editor*

Out of the Depths – Psalm 51

Martyn Lloyd-Jones, Christian Focus, 92 pages paperback, 2011 reprint.

This little paperback is ideal for evangelism. In a church plant a church member visited fifteen neighbours personally inviting them to attend church. All except one of the invitations were politely declined. She was particularly hesitant in one case because she expected an outright perhaps hostile response. However, to her amazement this lady in middle life responded positively and has begun to attend services. The first obstacle on hearing clear gospel preaching was the shock of being called a sinner and being exhorted to repent. This needs a little explanation in the contemporary religious climate. In a recent TV program the well-known personality Anne Widdecombe interviewed a variety of people including the Archbishop of Canterbury. The program was about the survival of the Christian Faith in the UK. The main impression given was that Christians are the moral people who do good works but not a word about sin, repentance or regeneration. Now the main issue for the lady who has begun to attend services are sin and repentance. Christianity is not only about doing good works. It is about repentance from sin and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. This little book of four sermons by Martyn Lloyd-Jones hits the bull's eye! It is totally relevant. This is gospel preaching at its very best. It flows along and is easy to read as he opens up the message of Psalm 51. 1. The Sinner's Confession, 2. The Sinner's Helplessness, 3. The Sinner's Central Need, and 4. Deliverance and the New Life.

The book has an introduction by Thabiti Anyabwile of the Cayman Islands in which he describes his conversion and that of his wife when they read writings by Dr Lloyd-Jones. A six page biography of Dr ML-J follows so that readers can be introduced to the preacher. *Editor*

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