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Websites www.reformation-today.org

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

<http://africanpastorsconference.com>



Group photo of those who attended and helped at the African Pastors' Conference in Gugulethu, Cape Town, April 2013.



The new Chinese leadership as of November 2012, Party Secretary and President.

Pray for them.

1 Timothy 2:1-2.

Xi Jinping and Li Kegang.

Front cover picture. *Open air witness in Port Harcourt. The photo is from Pastor Ani Ekpo.*

Editorial

RECENTLY DON CARSON DREW ATTENTION TO THE FACT THAT THE COUNTY OF YORKSHIRE WITH A POPULATION OF 5.3 million is on a par with Japan with regard to the number of Bible believers. That is only one believer to every 200. That fits the town of Pickering in Yorkshire where the situation is well known. It will be difficult to find more than 50 believers in the population of 10,000. That is one to 200. During twenty years of faithful gospel witness in Pickering there has not been one conversion of a person outside the families within in the church.

In this spiritual drought there is reason enough to persevere with the Concert of Prayer now in its third year of quarterly meetings in which there are eight centres each representing an average five churches.

Bill Dyer recently retired as pastor of the Evangelical Church in Pontefract. He is a zealous supporter of the Concert of Prayer. He urges that a basic and urgent subject for prayer is for the Lord to show us how to break through the great high wall that separates Bible believers from secularist society. The nearest we get is to have fifty children for a week at the annual Holiday Bible Club. At the final meeting some parents (mostly mums) attend but the men regard church attendance as irrelevant. It was not like that in Pontefract in the 1970s and 1980s. Pontefract was a mining town. In those years there were many conversions of men and women from outside the church. This came about through daily prayer meetings and much evangelism. To provide pastoral care for the numbers that were added three additional full-time pastors were employed. There was no finance to pay them. But as the church moved forward by faith every need was fully supplied.

Bill Dyer emphasises the paramount need to pray through the barriers of unbelief and lethargy to where we are effective in a secular society. Such intercession is a spiritual gift yet at the same time it is our responsibility as we see from Ezekiel 33:7-9.

If what took place in Pontefract in the 1970s and 1980s spread across the UK today that would be a national revival. Revival is the restoration of spiritual life that has been lost. The angels rejoice over one sinner that repents. A revival is when the angels go into feasting mode as they rejoice over many

who repent and believe. This is what took place on the day of Pentecost when three thousand were converted and baptised after one sermon.

Concern for the glory of God is a primary motive in prayer for spiritual awakening. Christ is glorified in the salvation of sinners. Then follows concern for our fellow citizens mindlessly rushing into a lost eternity. After the funeral of Mrs Thatcher on the BBC Newsnight program one contributor refused to be moved from his insistence that after death comes the judgement. That is the main point of a funeral. He insisted on that.

A further motive for prayer for a spiritual awakening is concern for the reputation of Christ's body the Church. When I witness to Muslims here in Leeds they point to churches that are now warehouses or offices or flats. I am told by them that Christianity is dying and they will take over. (see page 37).

A great bonus in the Concert of Prayer is unity. For most of us the Concert of Prayer is the only occasion when we have anything whatsoever to do with other Bible-based assemblies. Too many churches are isolated. The idea of joining in prayer with others is rejected even though differences are on matters far from central salvational beliefs. Division is widespread. Psalm 133 must be kept in mind.

How good and pleasant it is
when God's people live together in unity!

For there the LORD bestows his blessing,
even life forevermore.

Finally a motive for united intercession is the fact that we are seeing the breakdown of the family which is the main building block of society. The Gay marriage legislation will not only weaken marriage further but it will deprive us of the democratic right to say that homosexuality is sinful. The gay lobby agenda is to make it illegal to criticise homosexual behaviour. Preaching from Romans chapter one will be outlawed. Parents will be powerless to oppose teaching in schools which advances the principle that homosexuality is an acceptable alternative lifestyle. Australia has rejected Gay marriage. The New Zealand parliament has approved Gay marriage. In spite of fierce opposition leading to violence France has legislated for Gay Marriage. Soon the House of Lords will debate this issue. It is urgent that we make that a matter of prayer. We must pray for courageous clear-headed leaders in government and in the Church.

Gethsemane

He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, 'Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.' An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground (Luke 22:41-44).

HERE IS THE ACCOUNT OF THE TERRIBLE ORDEAL SUFFERED BY JESUS ON THE EVENING OF HIS betrayal and just before the unfolding drama of his trials leading to his death on the cross.

Regarding the circumstances of Gethsemane three questions arise:

1. What is meant by 'this cup'?
2. What caused such anguish that his sweat was like drops of blood?
3. What was the role of the angel who strengthened him?

When we have considered these I will explore teaching that is to be derived from Gethsemane.

The scene

East of Jerusalem in full view of the walls of the city lies the Garden of Gethsemane an area, of olive trees. Gethsemane (meaning an olive press) is beyond the Kidron valley and near the Mount of Olives. From the East Gate it is about half a mile to these olive groves. These have the same appearance generally as when Jesus and his disciples met there, which they often did (John 18:2). They chose a quiet and congenial place among the trees to rest. According to Josephus the original olive trees were cut down by Titus when he besieged Jerusalem in AD 70. It is claimed that the present trees date back to the seventh century.

Entering Gethsemane Jesus began to experience intense isolation. Many had left him (John 6:66). Judas had gone off on his mission to betray him. As confusion came and fears increased, so his disciples would soon abandon him. The previous four days had been intense. This day had been long. Jesus' disciples were too tired to support Jesus in prayer.

With Mark's description of Gethsemane we can follow the stages of what took place. First Jesus said to his disciples, 'Sit here while I pray.' He then took Peter, James and John along with him. The awful hour of Jesus' humiliation had arrived. He began to be deeply distressed and troubled. 'My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death,' he said to them. 'Stay here and keep watch.'

Then he left Peter, James and John and went further, about a stone's throw. Mark describes that as 'a little further'. Jesus was now on his own. With the light of the moon Peter, James and John were able to observe Jesus in his awful struggle (Heb 5:7). He fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the cup might be removed from him, 'Yet not what I will, but what you will.' Then an angel strengthened him. Returning to his disciples he found them sleeping. 'Simon,' he said to Peter, 'Are you asleep? Couldn't you keep watch for one hour? Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.' Just then there arrived on the scene the band of Temple guards and officials. This group was led by Judas Iscariot who went directly to Jesus and betrayed him with a kiss.

1. What is meant by 'this cup'?

In several places in Scripture we find that the cup refers to the wrath of God.

This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, said to me: 'Take from my hand this cup filled with the wine of my wrath and make all the nations to whom I send you drink it. When they drink it, they will stagger and go mad because of the sword I will send among them.' So I took the

cup from the LORD's hand and made all the nations to whom he sent me drink it: Jerusalem and the towns of Judah, its kings and officials, to make them a ruin and an object of horror and scorn, a curse – as they are today (Jer 25:15-18).

Awake, awake!
Rise up, Jerusalem,
you who have drunk from the hand of the LORD
the cup of his wrath,
you who have drained to its dregs
the goblet that makes people stagger (Isa 51:17).

God remembered Babylon the Great and gave her the cup filled with the wine of the fury of his wrath (Rev 16:19 see also 14:9-10)

The wrath of God is his perfectly just hatred and hostility toward sin. Those who refuse to repent and who continue in rebellion toward God lie under his wrath. 'The wrath of God is being revealed against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness' (Rom 1:18).

The cup given to Jesus that night in Gethsemane was the cup filled to the brim with all our sins. Into that cup was poured the evils of our sins and the punishment due to our guilt. These lines from a hymn express what is meant:

Death and the curse were in our cup:
O Christ, 'twas full for Thee!
But thou hast drained the last dark drop,
'Tis empty now for me.
(Anne Rose Cousin, 1824-1906, New Christian Hymns, 250)

The sufferings involved in making propitiation for our sins are focused on the metaphor of a cup. In terms of time, all the sufferings in paying the price in full for our sins is referred to by Jesus as 'this hour'.

‘Father, the hour is come, glorify your Son that your Son may glorify you’ (John 17:1 NKJV). And then to those who arrested him he said, ‘But this is your hour when darkness reigns’ (Luke 22:53).

2. What caused such anguish that his sweat was like drops of blood?

In Gethsemane Jesus saw vividly before him the impending eighteen hours of humiliation: arrest, betrayal, a threefold trial: Sanhedrin, Pilate and Herod, scourging so severe that it could kill and then crucifixion.

All this was appalling but worst of all was separation from his Father and the love he experienced in eternity. Never had Jesus in all eternity been removed from the comprehensive and perfect love of the Father. This unknown excruciatingly painful soul-suffering is why he sweat drops of blood.

From this point on, only humiliation and increasing pain of soul and body was before him – a portion so awful that he cried out, ‘My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death.’ From this moment until his last utterances, ‘It is finished’ and ‘Father, into your hands I commit my spirit’ he was to be the subject of brutality, insult and wickedness.

What makes Jesus different from all the martyrs who have died for confessing him as Saviour and Lord? The martyrs are not sinbearers. Here in Gethsemane Jesus was made the sinbearer. That is the dreadful ‘cup’ which he asked to be taken away from him if that were possible. All our sins were laid upon him, that is all the sins of his elect people throughout history. What nearly crushed Jesus to death in the Garden of Gethsemane was the weight of God’s wrath coming upon him as sinbearer.

Substitutionary atonement is expressed in several parts of Scripture but the most eloquent and perhaps the best known is the third stanza of five in the fourth Servant Song of Isaiah:

Surely he took up our pain
and bore our suffering,
yet we considered him punished by God,
stricken by him, and afflicted.
But he was pierced for our transgressions,
he was crushed for our iniquities;
the punishment that brought us peace was on him,
and by his wounds we are healed.
We all, like sheep, have gone astray,
each of us has turned to our own way;
and the LORD has laid on him
the iniquity of us all (Isa 53:4-6).

The most compact statement of substitutionary atonement in the New Testament is 2 Corinthians 5:21: ‘God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.’

Jesus’ agony in Gethsemane is not to be compared with martyrdom. Describing the martyrs of the Christian Church John Foxe recorded the experiences of hundreds who have been burned at the stake or beheaded. They died with courage.

Being made the sinbearer Jesus wrestled and prayed his way through to the firm decision that he would do his Father’s will and drink the cup of woe.

The manhood of Jesus is vividly displayed in the Garden of Gethsemane. Facing the horrors of hell – of abandonment by God – of suffering darkness and the evils of Satan he craved the fellowship and comfort of his friends. When we pitiful mortals face major surgery we find relief and comfort in the prayers, fellowship and support of relatives and close friends. That is how we are created. Jesus was perfect in his manhood and loved the company of his disciples and friends. For instance he loved the fellowship of the household of Lazarus, Mary and Martha. Now being isolated he longed more than

ever for his friends. He especially desired the closeness of Peter, James and John. But sadly all his closest friends let him down.

In Jesus we see the sinless man who is perfect. At the same time we must have in mind the words of the Athanasian creed. 'This man is God, of the same substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds.' Yes, he is eternal infinite God and at the same time he is man, of the substance of his mother, born into the world.

The man overwhelmed in the Garden of Gethsemane is 'perfect God and perfect Man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting. Jesus is equal to the Father as touching his Godhead, and yet inferior to the Father with regard to his manhood.' In the Garden of Gethsemane we view 'the God-man, not two, but one Christ, not by conversion of the Godhead into Flesh, but by taking of the manhood into God. Jesus is one not by confusion of substance, but by Unity of Person.'

Our iniquities were imputed to him and they pressed down upon him so much so that if he were only man he would expire under the weight of them. His nervous system responded so that he sweat blood. Has such a thing ever happened? Sweating blood? We never read of that in historical records or in Foxe's book of martyrs. It is unique.

Jesus said to them, 'my soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death' (Mt 26:38b). He was telling them that he was so distressed that he was afraid that he would pass out and die right there in the garden. The Germans use a word for which there is no parallel in English. It is *anfechtung*.

This term expresses turmoil, panic, despair, desolation and desperation which may enter the soul of a person because of a trial sent by God or through an attack of Satan. Psalm 88 comes closest to this and the concluding verses express the anguish of Jesus in the sGarden of Gethsemane.

I have borne your terrors and am in despair.
Your wrath has swept over me;
your terrors have destroyed me.
All day long they surround me like a flood;
they have completely engulfed me.
You have taken from me friend and neighbour –
darkness is my closest friend (Ps 88:15-18).

3. What was the role of the angel who strengthened him?

When Elijah was in flight and exhausted by his journey an angel came and ministered to his needs (1Ki 19:6). With the bread provided by the angel Elijah was able to complete his long journey to Sinai. He received exactly what was needed. When Jesus had completed his forty-day fast in the wilderness angels ministered to him. What an extraordinary privilege was given to the angel chosen by the Father to minister to Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. We do not know his name.

What kind of comfort and what courage were imparted by that angel? It is said that when our lives are transformed by the Holy Spirit we learn a new language, the language of Zion which is understood by believers universally. We do not yet know the language of heaven or the language used by the angel chosen to strengthen Jesus. We do know that there is such a thing as transcendence, that is knowledge above us. Eternity is something we cannot comprehend. For three hours impenetrable darkness surrounded the cross of Christ. That is a realm we cannot enter. As for the way the angel strengthened Jesus we can only surmise that since Jesus used Scripture only in defeating Satan in the wilderness it is probable the angel employed the Scriptures to fortify our Lord so that he would despise the coming shame, endure the suffering and hold unfalteringly before him the reward that would follow (Heb 12:2). This reward consists of his redeemed people, sometimes called his bride (Rev 21:2). The only place where the discouragement of the Messiah is recorded is in the second Servant Song of Isaiah. The angel may have encouraged Jesus with the

promises described in Isaiah 49:5-7 and then fortified him with resolution to do Yahweh's will (Ps 40:7-8).

We come now to teaching we derive from Gethsemane, which is as follows.

The 1689 Confession of Faith chapter 11 is devoted to justification by faith. It says there that Christ's one obedience is twofold – his active obedience rendered to the divine law, and his passive obedience rendered in his death. Christ's perfect life of obedience together with his propitiatory sacrifice constitute a righteousness which is like the seamless garment he wore and for which at the cross the soldiers cast lots. It is a complete righteousness and it is that perfect and complete righteousness which is imputed to the believer.

Gethsemane is the point at which the active role of Christ on our behalf ends and the passive role of Christ as our Redeemer begins. I do not suggest that an absolute and exact line can be drawn between the two parts of Christ's obedience. When hanging on the cross he thought of his mother's welfare. He spoke words of assurance to the criminal dying on the cross. The last eighteen hours of Jesus' life were overwhelmingly made up of submission to sinbearing and to being the Passover lamb that was sacrificed for us once and for all (1 Cor 5:7). This time is what he called drinking the cup, the time he described as 'the hour'. That was the principal reason for his coming into the world. By this one sacrifice he perfects for ever all those who are being made holy (Heb 10:14).

By way of personal application Gethsemane tells us of the terrible consequences of sin. See encapsulated in the experience of Gethsemane the personal cost and suffering endured on our behalf to save us from the penalty and power of sin. We must repent. In repenting we must maximise the guilt of our sin, hate it, repent of it and forsake it. Not only must I repent of my sin I must trust in Christ. I must come to him personally. Further I must confess him. 'Everyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame' (Rom 10:11). Trust in Christ must be explicit. It is more than just a notion in the head. 'For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified' (Rom 10:10).

Pierre Viret

Frederick Hodgson

PIERRE VIRET WAS BORN IN 1511 IN THE SMALL TOWN OF ORBE SITUATED ON THE ROUTE FROM THE RHINE TO Rhone valleys, in the Pays de Vaud (in modern-day Switzerland). The town itself was staunchly Catholic. His father was a tailor and was a devout Roman Catholic but still sent his son to a school where the Lutheran, Marc Romain, taught him. It was clear that Pierre had academic ability and his parents sent him to Paris in order to study for the priesthood. It was there that he embraced the Reformed faith before returning to Orbe.

Farel and Viret

Viret was ‘discovered’ by the fearless, energetic, zealous William Farel during his evangelisation of French-speaking Switzerland, which eventually led to Geneva becoming the stronghold of the Reformation. Many readers will be familiar with the story of Farel’s meeting with Calvin in 1536 as Calvin stayed overnight in Geneva on his way to Strasburg to pursue his studies. Farel insisted that



Calvin was called by God to help him bring about a more thorough reformation of the Genevan Church and the reluctant Calvin felt that God himself was calling him to submit to Farel’s call.

Farel had been attracted to the strategically placed Orbe in 1531. The town was unusual in that it was under the joint administration of Berne, which was Protestant, and Fribourg which was Catholic. In the face of much opposition from the Catholic population he preached the gospel there. The

young nineteen-year-old Pierre Viret listened to him and he argued with the priests who supported the old way.

The townspeople of Orbe were slow to respond to the gospel but many of the people coming in from the countryside were quite different and welcomed the good news. Farel realised that more preachers were needed, but it wasn't clear where they should come from. Some of the newly converted men of Orbe volunteered. Farel recognised that although only partly instructed themselves they were *not* ready for the challenge involved.

The modest Pierre Viret humbly shrank from coming forward. However Farel encouraged him. He reminded him that he should depend upon the power of God which is made perfect in weakness. He had earlier carefully and patiently explained the gospel to his parents and they had come to faith in Christ through his gentle labours. Although only nineteen years old, he was loved and accepted by the townspeople. They were willing to listen to him, even though he was suspected of heresy and had not been ordained. Some were converted by his first sermon preached in the town church on the 6th May 1531.

Viret and the costly evangelisation of Switzerland

Later in 1531 Viret begged the council of the small village of Payerne, bordering on the Catholic canton of Fribourg, for permission to hold a public disputation to establish whether his doctrines or those of the Catholic Church were most in agreement with the Word of God. The night before the disputation was fixed, a priest from Payerne Abbey ambushed Viret and gravely wounded him from behind using a sword. Although the priest confidently left him for dead, his friends discovered the badly injured Viret and he was nursed back to health.

In 1534 Viret travelled to Geneva to help Farel and Antoine Froment. The shy, retiring, intelligent Froment was born in Dauphiné like Farel and after his conversion helped Farel in his evangelisation of French-speaking Switzerland. At the time many of the citizens of Geneva were hostile to the gospel and a Catholic plot involving poison administered in soup was made upon the life of all three reformers. Froment was absent, Farel refused the soup as it was too thick, but Viret, being persuaded that the soup would be good for his health, had a whole bowlful and became

dangerously ill. This incident and that of the attempted murder by the priest worked against the Catholic cause for the priests and monks were viewed with great suspicion, whereas there was public sympathy for Viret. Two months later Calvin entered Geneva to be persuaded by Farel to stay to help the reformation in that city.

Viret and the Reformation in Lausanne

Shortly after Calvin came to Geneva, Viret went to Lausanne, capital of the Pays de Vaud. The area had just come under the sovereignty of the Protestant canton of Berne. With the hope of winning Lausanne to the Reformed cause, Berne organised a disputation at which all the Catholic clergy were obliged to be present. Farel and Viret spoke for the Reformed with Calvin in attendance. After the week-long disputation Lausanne declared in favour of the Reformation and eventually Viret was made pastor of the city.

He countered ignorance of the gospel by establishing an academy in 1537 for training men for the ministry. This came under the oversight of the Bernese authorities. It was the first training establishment of its kind in the French-speaking world and had learned men from Italy, Germany, France and Switzerland as its lecturers. One of these men, Theodore Bèza was eventually to become Calvin's successor in Geneva.

Family life and friendship with Calvin

A year later in October 1538 Viret married Elisabeth Turtaz from Orbe. Farel officiated at the wedding. Towards the close of that year Calvin was banished from Geneva and Viret was called to take his place in that city where he was greatly loved. Viret, known as the Smile of the Reformation, worked 'to rebuild the ruins, to dress the wounds, to reconcile the divers and opposing elements.' For a year he urged the council of Geneva to recall the exiled Calvin. Eventually the council softened and called Calvin back. He was most unwilling to return and it needed the persistence of Viret to persuade the reluctant Calvin to go back. Eventually he did return, but requested that Viret stay with him for several months. The close friendship of Calvin and Viret was to endure through many difficulties. Calvin remained in Geneva and Viret returned to Lausanne. They corresponded with each other about a large variety of subjects ranging from household matters to concerns of great importance.

In 1545, after a long illness Elizabeth died and the desperately sad Viret was invited to Geneva by Calvin with the words, 'Come to distract yourself, not only from your sorrow, but also from all your troubles. You need not fear that I will impose any work on you. I will take care that you enjoy your own pleasure in tranquillity.'

Banishment from Lausanne

Berne expected the church at Lausanne to be obedient to it and opposed the right of Viret to govern the church. They ruled that all must be permitted to participate in communion and that any pastor who refused to administer communion to anyone should be discharged. Viret was forced out of Lausanne for his stand at the Christmas communion in 1558. Other ministers nominated to fill his place refused to serve and joined Viret in exile in Geneva. Over a thousand people migrated from Lausanne, with a population of just over five thousand, to Geneva. Calvin founded his Genevan Academy using the academic staff who had left Lausanne. Viret was especially welcomed and was assigned the Church of St. Germain, but the crowds who flocked to his preaching were so large that the council moved him to the larger church of St. Pierre.

Viret and evangelism in France

He was not allowed to stay in Geneva however, as a serious illness struck him in 1561. His health improved as the summer came on but his condition deteriorated as the winter approached. He was urged by his doctors to seek the warmer climate of southern France. At this time the teenage Francis II of France had just died. During his brief reign the Cardinal of Lorraine and his brother, the Duke of Guise, effectively held power. With the accession of the even younger Charles IX to the French throne, Catherine de Medici held power, balancing the powerful Protestants such as Antoine, the King of Navarre, his brother Louis, Prince of Condé and the Châtillon brothers (Admiral Coligny, d'Andelot and the Cardinal of Châtillon) on the one hand and the Guise family on the other. The result of the political stalemate was that there was more toleration in France. This toleration was encouraged by Michel de l'Hôpital, the Chancellor of France. The toleration did not mean that there was no persecution but certain areas of France were distinctly safer than before. Protestants formed the majority in many parts of France, especially in the south.

Viret was immediately welcomed in France and churches from all over France requested his ministry as he had such a reputation. He arrived in Nîmes on October 6th and was received very warmly. So many people wanted to listen to him preach that he was obliged to speak in the open fields. On January 4th 1562 there was a service lasting six hours and Viret administered communion to over eight thousand believers.

Viret's sweet and gentle preaching was greatly appreciated by friends and foes alike. When he preached in a field in the Vaunage, the prior and monks listened to the wonders of the gospel and became Protestant, with the result that the abbey gave half its revenue to the work of evangelisation and the other half to the poor.

Whilst he was in Nîmes he preached every Sunday and Wednesday to ever increasing crowds. He was also employed as professor of theology there and acted as a peacemaker. His mediation was constantly sought to help when differences broke out between people. His ability as a mediator had been proved when he had given valuable help to Calvin was experiencing difficult relationships in Geneva at an earlier time.

When his leave from Geneva reached its conclusion, Nîmes sent a deputation to plead with the council at Geneva that he should be allowed to stay, but this request was refused. It was followed by requests for him to go to Montpellier, Montauban, Orléans and even Paris, so they allowed him to make his own mind up as to where to go. He decided to go to Montpellier and his ministry there was met with great success from its beginning in February 1562. 'Spectacular results followed with large numbers being won to the side of the Reformed Faith, including nearly the entire faculty of the famous medical college of Montpellier.'

Viret as a writer of ethics

After a short stay in Montpellier he accepted a call to Lyons in late May and remained there for three years. This was despite the issue of a royal edict forbidding all foreign-born pastors from ministering in France. He was exempted from this because of the Catholics themselves requested that he be allowed to stay. It was in Lyons that Viret completed his three-volume work, *Christian Instruction in the Doctrine of the Law and the*

Gospel. This work is reputed to demonstrate the supreme ability of Viret in Christian ethics. Although he was a prolific writer and produced over fifty books, this was his major theological work and ranks with Calvin's *Institutes* as one of the finest, most useful piece of Christian literature. In it he demonstrated his clear insight into politics and economics. Viret was strongly opposed to war, but conceded that under certain circumstances war was justified. Viret writing about economic justice said, 'The greatest evil that can be imagined is when the public purse is impoverished and individual men become wealthy. This is an evident sign that the commonwealth is in an unhealthy condition, that public policy is in weak and incapable hands and that the state is under the domination of thieves and bandits who make of it their prey.' Viret wrote on the evils of counterfeiting money, including counterfeiting of money by the state. He pointed out that this led to inflation and his writings are of course relevant to the practice of quantitative easing today.

Viret, unlike Calvin, was ready to extend openly the authority of the Bible over the State. According to Linder, Viret felt that all laws affecting public morals and related to spiritual values should be drawn directly from the moral law of God. However, he believed that these absolute and eternal laws of God had to be geared to the times in which people lived and the national temperament of the country to which the laws were to be applied.

On the authority of Church and State Pierre Viret stated, 'God in order to govern people, in order to establish his reign among men, instituted two types of ministers. He gave "particular charge" of souls to one; to the other, the body and goods. Ministers of the Word and ministers wielding the sword, pastors and magistrates, must lend each other mutual aid. Both, each in its own particular sphere, had as its mission to lead all people under the obedience of their Head in all.'

Closing period of his life

Towards the end of his life, during the Third French Civil War, Roman Catholic forces captured Viret at Pau. Unlike his fellow ministers, he escaped with his life because of the very high esteem his enemies had of him. He returned to his ministry, which by then was in Béarn. He died in April 1571, but the location of his grave is unknown.

Reformation Today Website

New materials on our Website

www.reformation-today.org

SINCE ITS BEGINNING IN 1970 *REFORMATION TODAY* HAS BEEN LIMITED MORE OR LESS TO PUBLISHING ARTICLES averaging six to eight pages and seldom more than that.

With its seemingly infinite memory resources the electronic revolution enables us to share materials well beyond ten pages. These materials need to be high quality and relevant.

This is the first time that I have written an introduction to articles being placed on our RT website. At the outset I affirm our policy in which we only publish material by living authors. Agencies abound that produce wonderful resources from the past. It is said for instance the Charles Haddon Spurgeon website is extremely popular.

Turning now to new materials of the highest quality I begin with Dr Gary Crampton. Formerly Presbyterian he is now pastor of a Reformed Baptist Church in the USA. He has provided a brilliant 31 page analysis of *The Religious Affections* by Jonathan Edwards. This work by Edwards is a classic. It is the best writing available which expounds the difference between true and false profession of Christianity. To read the whole book by Edwards is ideal but most are too busy for that. But this analysis by Dr Crampton will show how valuable are Edwards' writings.

Cheryl Jean Erwin has a ministry to widows. She is a second year PhD student at Southern Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky. She reminds us that the number of widows is one of the fastest growing groups within the Church and our society today. According to the United States Census Bureau, approximately one out of ten women over the age of 17 is a widow. In two parts of 11 and 7 pages Cheryl addresses the needs of widows. Readers will soon recognise the quality of her work.

John J Murray who has served many years as a minister in the Free Church of Scotland in 9 pages describes the 18th Century Cambuslang revival. The churches were lifeless. This revival was unexpected. The leaders were not well known. This is encouraging because it gives us hope in our weakness.

Phil Arthur is pastor of the Free Grace Baptist Church in Lancaster. He is well known for his knowledge of Church history and gripping manner in portraying it. His style of writing is pleasing. In this 14 page description of Thomas Tillam's Legacy – the Story of a Northumbrian Church, he reports five false charges made against that godly pastor. One of these was that some whom he had baptised 'presently run mad, had the palsy, were blind, have been drowned, and have hanged themselves'. You can read about the other charges on the website.

Dr Roger D. Duke was ordained as a Baptist minister in 1982. He is currently Senior Acquisitions Editor for BorderStone Press and Senior Consulting Editor for The Veritas Network (theveritasnetwork.org). Dr Duke has given us two articles on John A Broadus. Tom Nettles who is senior professor of Church History at Southern Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky describes Broadus as 'one of the greatest New Testament scholars and homileticians of the nineteenth century in the English speaking world. His commentary on Matthew in the American Commentary series and his book *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons* demonstrated this dual expertise. He served as a pastor of the Charlottesville Baptist church where he had a massive influence on the students at the University of Virginia. Broadus served on the first faculty of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He taught New Testament and Homiletics from 1859 until 1895. At the death of James Petigru Boyce in 1888, Broadus served as President of that institution until his death on March 16, 1895.

Dr Duke's first article on Broadus (11 pages) tells of his coming to the doctrine of election. The second (9 pages) illustrates his love for souls particularly in the time of the Civil War (1861-1865) which was the most hurtful of all wars experienced by Americans. Both are warmly recommended.

China Today

By Roger Weil

DURING THE FAMOUS BATTLE OF WATERLOO in 1815, the French cannon were inflicting heavy losses on the thin red line of British troops standing on the ridge above the field of battle. The Duke of Wellington, mounted on his charger just behind them shouted the famous words, *'Hard pounding, gentlemen! Hard pounding!'* to his men who were suffering so many casualties.

These words could equally well be applied to the sufferings of God's people in China during the last one hundred and forty years. First, by Chinese Emperors and latterly, by the Communist party. For most of this time it has indeed been hard pounding!

Recently a storm of controversy has broken out in America, sparked by an article in 'Christianity Today' alleging that the tempo of persecution of Christians in China had increased alarmingly. Others with knowledge of the religious situation there denied this categorically! We might well view this as little more than the

proverbial 'storm in a teacup'. However, it serves to remind us that the huge expansion of God's Church in that great country is, in several places, still being hotly contested. So what is happening?

Paul Hattaway has been visiting and assisting house churches in China for the past thirty years. He is also the founder and director of the Asia Harvest Mission. He is currently engaged in an enormous literary project covering the history of the house church movement in all of China's thirty provinces. The series is under the general title, 'Fire and Blood – the Church in China'; eleven volumes are planned! Volume two, 'Henan. The Galilee of China', was published by Piquant in 2009. Henan, the most populous province in China (100 million) is called, 'The Jesus Nest', by the Communist authorities because of its high concentration of Christians (upwards of ten percent), the highest of all China's provinces. In reading the hard and turbulent history of the rise and progress of the Christian faith in Henan, one can see this replicated throughout China as a whole; years of initial hostility and resolute indifference

followed by cautious interest and the days of small things. In turn there has been a harvest of souls, times of terror and violent persecution and latterly the revival that God has given, an open door that no man can shut! Patient suffering for the faith has been a leading feature of God's Church in China that continues up to the present day. Especially is this true of Henan where it is often expected and even seen as having a purpose! One of their leaders writes:

Our only seminary is when we go to prison. That's where we learn the most from the Lord. Here we have learned many valuable lessons about him that we never could have learned from a book. Consequently, we have come to know the Lord in a deeper way. We know his goodness and his loving faithfulness to us. You see, we do not believe it is the government or evil people or the Devil who sends us to prison or causes us to suffer. We believe it is the Lord who allows us, by his grace, to suffer for his name. Anything that happens to us, either good or bad, comes from the hand of God. This is not fatalism. Rather that our Heavenly Father is in complete control of a Christian life.

So what of today? Hattaway believes that the general level of

persecution is slowly diminishing, though there remain areas where it is still severe, notably in rural Anhui and Inner Mongolia. He writes:

There is no doubt in my mind that overall the level of persecution is far less than it was ten or fifteen years ago. Things seem to have dropped down a scale; previous sentences of twenty years for a believer are now three, a three-year sentence is three months and what was three months is now a fine.

However, of greater importance than the level of persecution is the consolidation needed after thirty years of spectacular growth (from two million in 1980 to approximately eighty million today). The urgent needs are good leadership, sound biblical teaching and in affluent cities, the ability to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts are required.

The Chinese government is still determined to do all in its power to halt the expansion of the house church movement. Therefore there will continue to be tough times ahead for the believers, times indeed of 'hard pounding', as in the past. But the Lord is their helper and will surely give them the victory. (For more see News).

Jesus – the Good Shepherd

By Bob Davey

John chapter 10, verses 7 to 21.

JESUS HAD JUST CHARGED THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS OF ISRAEL WITH BEING DESTROYERS OF GOD'S FLOCK RATHER than being true shepherds to it (10:1-6). To contrast himself with these false spiritual shepherds, Jesus makes two more great 'I AM' claims about himself, the third and fourth in John's Gospel with a description. They are, 'I AM the door of the sheep' and 'I AM the good shepherd'.

When Jesus says I AM he is claiming the right to use the divine name JEHOVAH (YAHWEH) of Exodus 3:14. The proof for this is John 8:58,59.

The prophecies of Jeremiah 23:1-6 and Ezekiel 34 were in the course of being fulfilled. The Messiah would deliver God's flock from the false shepherds (Jer 23:5,6; Ez 34:23-26).

I AM the door of the sheep (John 10: 7-10)

Then Jesus said to them again, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who ever came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.'

Most assuredly, I say to you. Jesus prepares his hearers for the important claim that he is to make.

I am the door of the sheep. 'I, (emphatic), and I alone am the door of the sheep (sheepfold)'. The sheepfold represents the kingdom of God here. Jesus is the *only* access into the kingdom of God.

He always has been, and always will be, ever since Adam and Eve fell into sin. Christ is the 'one Mediator between God and men' (1Tim. 2:5). All the promises of salvation ever made by God were pointers to the Saviour. True believers have always embraced these promises.

All who ever came before me are thieves and robbers. Every one, whoever they were, who had made the claim that *through them* entrance could be made

into the kingdom of God were liars. All false spiritual leaders and false prophets, especially those who claimed to be the Messiah, were in this category of thieves and robbers.

but the sheep did not hear them. Throughout Old Testament times, true believers always recognised and rejected all false prophets and false spiritual leaders like the Pharisees.

I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved. Jesus repeats his great claim – ‘I, and I alone am the door’. He asserts that each and every one of the saved, and no others, will get entrance into the kingdom of God through him alone. Saving faith in him is the way into the kingdom.

will go in and out. This is a way of saying that the flock will enjoy spiritual freedom and security.

and find pasture. The flock will also enjoy spiritual refreshment and plenty. ‘God will supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus’ (Phil 4:19).

The study of the Word of God, as food for the soul, is to be included in the idea of ‘pasture’, as is fellowship in the local church.

The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. Jesus contrasts his ministry with that of the Pharisees whom he is condemning. He repeats that these false teachers were ‘thieves and robbers’ who only destroyed the flock of God. In contrast with them, Jesus gives eternal life.

that they may have life ... have it more abundantly. The life that Jesus gives is salvation. Salvation is a joyful life, filled with spiritual blessings. These are to be enjoyed even in the midst of physical hardships, poverty and persecution.

Believers can ‘rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith – the salvation of your souls’ (1 Peter 1:8,9). ‘The love of God has been poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us’ (Rom 5:5). Even the best that believers receive in this world is not to be compared with the glory yet to be revealed in us (Rom 8:18; 1 Cor 2:9).

I AM the good shepherd (John 10:11-21)

Before studying this passage it would be helpful to read Psalm 23 in its entirety, and also Psalm 100.

'I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep. But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep.'

I am the good shepherd. 'I, (emphatic), and I alone am the good shepherd'. Jesus, in making this great claim about himself, is contrasting himself with the religious leaders of Israel facing him.

'Good' here means intrinsically good, good by nature, good through and through, only good. Only God can call himself 'good' in this sense (Matt 19:17). Jesus is making a double claim to deity here, by his name and by his character.

gives his life for the sheep. Not only does a good shepherd feed and tend the flock with watchful loving care, but he is also willing to lay down his life on behalf of the flock, if at all necessary. A good example was David (1 Sam 17:34,35). But Jesus was actually going to die for his sheep.

The hireling flees ... does not care. When a dangerous animal attacks the flock, a hired servant runs away to save his own life. He does not really care about the flock. So it was with the Pharisees. They were not true spiritual shepherds of God's flock.

I am the good shepherd; and I know my sheep, and am known by my own. As the Father knows me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.

These two verses cannot be separated and would be best read as follows 'I know my sheep and am known by mine, even as the Father knows me and I know the Father'. They carry profound meaning.

I am the good shepherd. Jesus repeats again 'I, (emphatic), and I alone am the good shepherd'.

I lay down my life for the sheep. Jesus repeats again what the cost will be for him. His death for the sheep was essential in order to save them. This points forward to the atoning work of Christ on the cross. There God's wrath against sin was appeased. At the appointed time, Jesus had to lay down his life as a sin-offering. He knew it, and talks of it. Each and every sheep for whom he died will be saved.

I know my sheep, and am known by my own. Jesus speaks of what salvation brings about. Jesus, as the good shepherd, will have a living, loving personal relationship with each member of his flock. This is a matter for the greatest comfort for all true believers. Communion with Christ promotes a personal assurance of salvation. No one can rightfully claim to be a Christian who does not know this mutual, loving, personal, communion with Jesus. It is the fruit of being born again.

even as the Father knows me and I know the Father. There is a *parallel* between the personal relationship that Jesus has with all the members of his flock and that which he himself has with the Father. Jesus is speaking about a living personal communion.

Note: his sheep are brought into as close a relationship with God as it is possible for humans to have!

That is why, in Christ, believers are adopted as children of God. It is in order that they can know God as 'Father', by the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:9,15-17). This relationship is closer to God than what the highest archangel enjoys! Christ is not ashamed to call his sheep, brethren (Heb 2:11,12).

Of course believers can never know the depth, nor the extent, of that personal communion that eternally exists between the Son and the Father, but they are brought as close to it as is possible.

Jesus will give more teaching on the subject of communion between the Father, himself and believers in chapter 14:19-23 and in chapter 17:20,21.

This was the way forward for the kingdom of God, a full salvation, the life more abundant.

Salvation not for the Jews only but for all the world

And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear my voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd.

The fold represents the kingdom of God and the sheep represent the people of God.

this fold. From the time of the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the promise of the kingdom of God (the Covenant) was confined to their descendants, the Jewish people. Yet it was only believers within the nation who were the true flock of God. They were saved by faith. So the kingdom of

God, in its outward aspect, belonged to the nation of Israel, but the kingdom of God in its saving power, belonged to the Israelite believers alone.

Christ was now going to bring about a change in this exclusive arrangement with the Jews.

'And other sheep ... them also I must bring'. The kingdom of God was to be extended to include believing Gentiles as well (John 3:16). This had always been the plan of God, clearly revealed by the Old Testament prophets. For example see Hosea 1:10; 2:23 as explained in Romans 9:23-26.

Salvation for the Gentiles had also been revealed to Abraham himself in the promise that 'in your seed (Christ) all the nations of the earth will be blessed' (Genesis 12:3; 18:18; 22:18), explained in Galatians 3:7-9,16,28,29. Now the time was coming for Gentile believers to be included in the fold.

'I must'. It *must* be so, it could not be otherwise.

them also I must bring, and they will hear my voice. The Gentile sheep will hear the voice of the good shepherd. In Old Testament times Jewish true believers had always embraced the promise of salvation and that will continue to happen. However, in future, the elect from among the Jews will be joined by the elect from among the Gentiles. All the elect, both Jews and Gentiles, will 'hear my voice' and be saved. John 6:37,44,45 will be true for all. Salvation will be the same for all.

there will be one flock and one shepherd. There will be only one flock (not fold) which is his Church, made up of saved Jews and saved Gentiles (Gal 3:28,29). This Church will become international and universal. The head of this One Church is the Lord Jesus Christ, the 'good shepherd'. The fulfilment of this inclusion of Gentile believers is recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. We must note that since Pentecost, the birthday of the Christian Church, though the outward kingdom of God now resides in the professing Church of Christ only (the fold), the true kingdom of God, as ever, belongs to true believers (the flock).

'Therefore my Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from my Father.'

Therefore my Father loves me. Jesus points out the reward to him of bringing salvation to his flock by dying for them. The Father's love is reward enough! The full loving reward that he will receive from his Father is found in Philippians 2:8-11.

I lay it down of myself. Three times Jesus says that he will lay down his life voluntarily. Jesus speaks of this laying down of his life as a certainty. There is no doubt about it.

This command I have received from my Father. Jesus will lay down his life in obedience to his Father's will. This too establishes the certainty of Jesus laying down his life.

that I may take it again. Jesus will lay down his life with the view to a resurrection. Death would not be able to hold him. Twice Jesus makes the incredible claim that he has the power in himself to raise himself from the dead! If anything were to prove his deity this would. He points to the resurrection as something necessary to bring about salvation. The resurrection brings victory over sin, death and Satan. The sin-offering is accepted by God, the proof of which is the resurrection.

I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. Jesus says that he has the authority, the right, to both lay down his life and to take it up again. He has this right because he is the sinless Son of God. He will exercise that right in obedience to his Father's will.

Division of opinion about Christ

Therefore there was a division again among the Jews because of these sayings. And many of them said, 'He has a demon and is mad. Why do you listen to him? Others said, 'These are not the words of one who has a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?'

there was a division again among the Jews. As often happened at the end of very strong and deep teachings of Jesus, there was a division of opinion among the scribes and Pharisees (6:52; 7:43; 9:16).

He has a demon and is mad. His critics raise the old charge that Jesus is devil-possessed and is raving (7:20; 8:48). Others, more fair-minded, disagreed. They give two reasons.

These are not the words of one who has a demon. They had recognised something of the beauty and authority in the teaching of Jesus. Besides, they had not forgotten the great miracle that Jesus had performed so very recently, *Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?'* These more fair-minded people recognise the folly of charging Jesus with being demon-possessed. But they were not prepared to assert and avow that Jesus was the true Messiah.

Reactions of people to Christ have not changed. Neither then, nor now.

Gay Marriage

IN THE BOOK OF DANIEL WE READ OF AN EDICT SAYING THAT ALL WHO REFUSED TO FALL DOWN AND WORSHIP the image of gold set up by King Nebuchadnezzar would be killed (Dan 3:6). Similarly in Revelation it is predicted that all who refuse to worship the image set up in honour of the beast will be slain (Rev 13:15).

This is a vivid picture of the opposition God's people face when confronting the totalitarian claims of anti-God regimes. For generations in Britain, after the Bible, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs* was one of the most widely read books – a work recording the refusal of faithful believers to compromise and pay homage to the claims of those who wished them to deny the truth of Scripture. During the twentieth century, it is well known that world-wide there were probably more Christian martyrs, killed for their testimony, than in all previous centuries combined. Violent persecution of Christians continues in numerous places – from North Korea, to Nigeria, to Saudi Arabia. Those believers who have escaped out of Syria describe the terror faced when Christians are captured by rebel so-called freedom fighters. They are given 48 hours to convert to Islam or be executed.

The more subtle challenge in the West has been for Christians to 'bow the knee' to false ideologies – godless atheism, liberal theology and moral relativism. To refuse to 'bow the knee' to politically correct thinking is likely to incur ridicule, and those who do so boldly are highly unlikely to be given space and a voice in the public square.

The latest, global ideological challenge to which all, including Christians, are expected to 'bow the knee' is the dogma of 'equality and diversity' – behind which slogan all are expected to affirm and celebrate homosexuality. The push for 'gay marriage' is, in reality, a 'front', behind which any who dare to deny that same-sex sexual unions are 'normal' and 'right' are labelled as bigots, and on a par with racists.

In Canada, where same-sex marriage was legalised in 2005, a government minister has had the effrontery to say that ‘if the Catholic church has a problem with homosexuality’ then it should ‘change its teaching’.¹

It is tempting, when hearing of yet another news story about gay marriage, to simply groan and switch off. We are told regularly that ‘the sky won’t fall’ if gay marriage is introduced. But surely, as believers, we are called on to ‘seek the good of the city’, wherever we happen to live (Jer 29:7). If gay marriage is introduced, it is future generations who will suffer, as the ‘marriage culture’ weakens as it has done in those countries which have taken this step. The most visible result is the increasing numbers of children growing up without one of their natural parents. As soon as gay marriage is legalised, there is a *de facto* acceptance that everyone has the ‘right’ to reproduce, if needed calling on tax-payers to fund artificial reproductive technologies. Increasing numbers of children are being born – deprived of their ‘right’ to know who one of their natural parents is. They are deprived not only of either mother-care or father-care, but also deprived of a genealogy on at least one, if not both sides of their ‘family’.²

Passively sitting back and accepting the advance of the gay rights agenda means that we are acquiescing in a fundamental challenge to God’s created design. ‘Male and female created he them’ (Gen 1:27). Where same-sex marriage has been legalised, this has been the outworking of the new ideology that says that ‘gender’ is merely a social construct, and that we have the ‘human right’ to choose and change our gender. Young children are being taught to question their gender identity. In 2009, one ‘progressive’ couple in Sweden even chose to bring their child up ‘gender neutral’ and kept the sex of the child secret so that the child could ‘choose’ which sex it wanted to be, and it seems that some in Canada are following that lead.³

If we live in countries where we are blessed with the democratic right to speak out, campaign, and protest, we should use those opportunities.

This is a crucial moment in our history. The future of marriage is in the balance. In the United States, we wait for the decision of the Supreme Court on DOM (Defence of Marriage Act) and Prop. 8 (Proposition 8, the ruling against same-sex marriage in California). For up-to-date news, and how to respond, the National Organisation for Marriage coordinates the defences of man-woman marriage.⁴ In France, as I write, President Hollande is pushing ahead, determined to fast-track a bill to allow gay marriage and adoption rights for gay couples, even in the face of a huge popular backlash, co-ordinated by the movement *Manif Pour Tous*. Large public demonstrations of well over a million demonstrators in Paris and protests in other parts of France have occurred.⁵

In April 2013, lawmakers in the lower house in Uruguay voted to legalise same-sex marriage by 71 out of 92; it is expected that this will soon be signed into law. Shortly afterwards, also in April, lawmakers in New Zealand voted to legalise same-sex marriage by 77 to 44. This was a very different result to that in Australia, where in April 2013 the federal government voted against same-sex marriage by 98 votes to 42. A total of thirteen countries in the world have now accepted same-sex marriage.

In the United Kingdom, opposition to the government's same-sex marriage bill is being co-ordinated by the Coalition for Marriage.⁶ Prayer and action are both urgently needed. If this bill goes through our gospel freedoms will inevitably be impacted. As has already been experienced in Canada (see footnote one) it will be used as a means by which to challenge churches, youth groups and families who teach that homosexual practice is wrong. Teachers and public sector workers who express conscientious disagreement with same-sex marriage could find their jobs under threat. And as a country we will be expecting citizens to endorse a lie. Same-sex unions are not the same as man-woman marriage. No-one should be forced to say that they are. Brendan O'Neill, an atheist journalist and blogger, who opposes gay marriage, writes: 'There has been a "sea change" in attitudes . . . everyone who's anyone (or who wants to be) now genuflects at the gay-marriage

altar'.⁷ He has received death threats for standing against the new orthodoxy. 'Same-sex marriage' is now the image to which we are expected to bow down.

Jonathan Leeman writes: 'Same-sex marriage itself is the act of wrongful governmental imposition. Martin Luther wrote, "For when any man does that for which he has not the previous authority or sanction of the Word of God, such conduct is not acceptable to God, and may be considered as either vain or useless." And God has never given human governments the authority to define marriage. He defined it in Genesis 2 and has not authorized anyone to redefine it. Any government that does is guilty of usurpation. Since same-sex marriage is effectively grounded in idolatrous religion (see Rom. 1:23, 32), its institutionalization represents nothing more or less than the progressive position's imposition of idolatrous religion upon the rest of us.'⁸

The false teaching of evolution, the false teaching that marriage and gender are just social constructs which we can change at will – these are 'strongholds', and truth has been exchanged for a lie. But this is precisely where we turn to the power and promises of God. We believe Christ came to destroy the works of the evil one (1 John 3:8; 1 Cor 15:24-25). United intercession is of vital importance.

¹ For the impact of same-sex marriage legislation on religious freedom in Canada, see: Bradley Miller, 'Same-Sex Marriage Ten Years on: Lessons from Canada', *Public Discourse*, November 5th 2012, <http://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2012/11/6758/>

² Elizabeth Marquardt has written prolifically on this. A number of the reports she has written are freely available on-line, if you google her name. For example: *The Revolution in Parenthood: The Emerging Global Clash between Adult Rights and Children's Needs* (New York: Institute for American Values, 2006).

³ Mia Freedman, 'This baby is being raised genderless', *MamaMia*, 25 May 2011,

⁴ www.nationformarriage.org

⁵ Robert Lopez provides an English translation website to follow the French pro-marriage movement: englishmanif.blogspot.com

⁶ c4m.org.uk Short succinct arguments against same-sex marriage can be found on the website under 'marriage minutes'.

⁷ Brendan O'Neill, 'A Case-study in Conformism', *Spiked*, 11 April 2013, <http://www.spiked-online.com/site/article/13518/>

⁸ Jonathan Leeman, 'Love and the inhumanity of same-sex marriage', <http://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/tgc/2013/04/15/love-and-the-inhumanity-of-same-sex-marriage/>

China

From a visitor to China.

THIS WAS MY FIRST EXPERIENCE IN WESTERN China and my first opportunity to observe the situation in one of the Islamic heartlands of the country. I was in a province inhabited by one of the minority nationalities, and they are solidly Muslim. I was able to observe 20,000 Muslim men participating in Friday prayers at one of the four most important mosques in the north-west of the country. They spilled out of the grounds of the mosque on to the pavement and into the road. It occurred to me that, if God were to send a gospel awakening to that people group, the impact could be very far-reaching.

From another visitor to China we received this testimony:

I am in the 'Jerusalem of China' now and will celebrate the resurrection of Christ with believers here tomorrow. It is wonderful to be with the Lord's people in this city where the Holy Spirit has worked so powerfully in recent years. There are said to be at least one million Christians here.

There are numerous church buildings throughout the city with red crosses that are visible from afar. I have met some pastors here who preach every day of the week. It is amazing to see the zeal of these servants of Christ and the hunger of the people for the Word. I had the opportunity this past week to preach in a few places and rejoiced to be with the believers here. I also preached here at 6:00 am one morning from Ephesians 1:1-7. I don't ever remember preaching that early before! The Lord gave much grace and help in the ministry of the Word.

Our first classes went very well with over forty students from various parts of the country, including some minority students from the Lisu and Hani people. One of the students showed me her Lisu Bible which was the result of the labours of J O Fraser's faithful ministry among this people who formerly worshipped demons. The Lisu are one of the strongest Christian groups among the minority people in China. Fraser's fruits are still growing in the lives of Lisu today.

Observation for intercession. Pray that increasingly the strong and

numerous Christians in the East of China will go out and church plant among the many unreached people groups in Western China and in the Islamic strongholds in the West.

Central African Republic

CAR is a landlocked country with the Congo on the south, Cameroon on the West and Chad and Sudan on the North. The country has a population of 4.5 million. 76 percent of the population is Christian and 13 percent Muslim.

Extremist Muslim rebels have taken over CAR which has a history of anarchy, of coups and counter-coups. In the current revolution Christian property has been targeted. Church buildings have been attacked and the homes of Christians looted in the aftermath of a bloody coup by a band of Muslim rebels. The rebels seized control of the country on 24 March following a three-month uprising. Their leader, Michel Djotodia, has assumed the presidency from the ousted president François Bozizé. He is CAR's first Muslim president.

A senior church leader said that the rebels destroyed a number of church buildings when they entered the south-eastern town of Bangassou. The house of a seminary rector was robbed and

destroyed, and a mechanic severely beaten when he would not reveal where church-owned vehicles were kept. A Baptist church in Bambari was also destroyed.

The rebellion spread from the north, where CAR's Muslim minority is concentrated, and has had a militant Islamic character. The Seleka rebels are said to follow Wahhabism, an extreme and puritanical version of Islam that is practised in Saudi Arabia.

CAR has had a succession of unstable, military governments since it gained independence in 1960. Ousted president Bozizé himself came to power in a coup ten years ago. CAR is currently in a lawless state. On 25 March, Djotodia suspended the constitution, announced the dissolution of the National Assembly and said that he intends to rule by decree. The violent coup has been condemned by the African Union, the UN Security Council and the US.

Chechnya

Situated north of Georgia and formally still part of the Russian Federation, Chechnya remains one of the most difficult places for Christians in Russia. Persecution is political as well as religious, since Christianity is associated with

Russia, with whom they had civil war. The influence of Islam is growing; all indigenous Christians are seen as traitors to Islam and society and suffer greatly from government oppression. Conversion is a huge disgrace to the family and brings the risk of 'honour killings'. Fellowship and public confession of faith is almost impossible.

We need to pray for the few very small Chechen Christian group meetings, with no more than 3-5 members and for Christians who receive death threats and must leave the country.

North Korea

South Korea is a prosperous country with a population of 48 million. North Korea with 23 million people is impoverished and isolated. There are reasonably rich mineral and agricultural resources but with bad leadership the nation produces less than one-tenth than the state of Pennsylvania – which is roughly the same size but with half the population.

Through persecution hundreds of thousands of Christians have died in North Korea. About 100,000 are locked up in prison camps. Very little is known of the underground Church. Many in North Korea seek to escape across the long northern

border into China. North Korea has threatened America with nuclear missiles. The Foreign Secretary has visited China in an effort to persuade the Chinese government to tame North Korea which is a menace to the entire region.

Scotland

On Saturday February 23rd 2013, the first Edinburgh Conference took place in Charlotte Baptist Chapel. The speakers were the Reverend Andrew Quigley from Airdrie and Reverend John J Murray, a retired *Free Church of Scotland Continuing* minister. Both papers were excellent, providing much food for thought. The Banner of Truth was a welcome presence, providing a well-stocked bookstall.

The Edinburgh Conference has been set up by a group of young men who want to see a Reformed conference taking place in Edinburgh on a regular basis. The paper given by John J Murray on the Cambuslang revival is to be found on the RT website. The annual Westminster Conference in London was initiated by a group of young men in 1950. May this new initiative in Edinburgh enjoy a bright future. For details contact james_mildred@hotmail.co.uk

African Pastors' Conferences

PASTOR PHIL ROBERTS IS NOW A MEMBER OF the team and has taken over the work of the treasurer from Mrs Rachel Rothwell who has requested this because she has health problems. She has done sterling work for the APCs. Phil has just returned from South Africa where he participated in the conferences in George, Port Elizabeth and Kingwilliamstown. Donations which can be gift aided should be posted to Pastor Phil Roberts, 121 Hartshill Road, STOKE ON TRENT, ST4 7LU

The APC at Port Elizabeth was encouraging with 35 in attendance. The quality of the materials in the Kingwilliamstown was consistently excellent. Forty were in attendance. The hospitality provided by the seminary was outstanding. Unity was a prominent feature with several denominations represented. Lawrence Lama of Zambia was the main preacher at these APCs.

Shortly after Isaac Makashinyi arrived from Zambia at Johannesburg he and our APC full-



Isaac Makashinyi

time worker Mike Marsland, were held up at gunpoint. Isaac was robbed of all his luggage and his computer.

In spite of this he preached fluently at the Botswana APC. Following this a most discouraging setback beset the team. At the Zimbabwean border entrance for the books was refused. This occurred at the Swaziland border last year. 200 pastors in Bulawayo are thus deprived of the books they so much need. This kind of obstacle is a major setback for the work.

The Fatal Flaw

The fatal flaw in the theology of Infant Baptism

Jeffrey D Johnson, 362 pages, Free Grace Press USA, 2010. Foreword by Tom J Nettles.

PROF DR NIGEL LEE WHO DIED RECENTLY IN AUSTRALIA EARNED A NUMBER OF PHDS. HE KEPT A SCORE OF BOOKS written for and against infant baptism and maintained that the number was about equal.

So what is meant by 'the fatal flaw'? Arguments and counter-arguments flow over many texts. But there is a single over-riding consideration and that is the difference between the Old Testament administration for Israel and the New Testament administration for the Church of Christ worldwide. The Church is not a theocracy. It consists of a people called out of society. The continuity and discontinuity of the covenant is the central issue. The difference between the Old and the New Covenant is addressed in this book by Jeffrey D Johnson. He is pastor of Grace Bible Church in Conway, Arizona. He steers his readers through a study of the Abrahamic, Mosaic and New Covenant.

He explains the differences between the Abrahamic covenant and the Mosaic covenant. He then moves on to expound the differences between the Mosaic (which we call the Old Covenant made with the people of Israel) and the New Covenant. The participants are different. The form (substance) is different. The Old was entered by physical birth but the New is entered by spiritual birth. The Old concerned a nation. The New consists of a spiritual kingdom. The duration is different. The Old was temporal whereas the New is eternal. The Old was conditional. 'If you keep my commandments then you as a nation will be my people.' The New is unconditional. The law of God is not written upon stone but on the minds and hearts of all God's elect people so that they will never fall. Pastor Johnson shows that while blessings were held out for obedience and curses for disobedience, Israel for most of her history was disobedient. He quotes Stephen's speech recorded in Acts 7 to confirm this view. He does not mention Jeremiah chapter two which suggests that when the new generation emerged from the wilderness to enter Canaan, that might

have been a period of obedience. Ezekiel chapter 16 portrays Israel as constantly disobedient. Jeremiah in a number of chapters describes the unfaithfulness of Judah.

Hebrews chapter eight emphasises the discontinuity of the Old and the New Covenants. The emphasis is on the 'Not'. NOT like that covenant which they broke. No! *Not* like that because now they will all know me from the least of them to the greatest of them.

The question of apostasy is expounded. In order to include the baptism of infants paedobaptists stress the unity of the Old and the New Covenants and explain the discontinuity in Hebrews chapter 8 as referring to the fact that now all nations and tribes are included, whereas in the Old it was Jews only, with perhaps individual Gentiles who were converted like Rahab. But that is not the gist of Hebrews 8 which is emphasising the nature of the New Covenant compared with the Old. Regeneration is the difference - the writing of God's law on the heart and mind of every member of the New Covenant. In order to be consistent, paedobaptists make room for apostasy in the New Covenant. They employ Hebrews chapters 6 and 10 to support that view. Jeffrey Johnson answers that by highlighting the fact that in the New all those who are in Christ are saved infallibly. Those who make profession and then apostatise prove that they were not born again in the first instance, which is how John Owen and most commentators interpret Hebrews 6 and 10.

The author repudiates antinomianism and deals clearly with the nature of Mosaic law. He distinguishes between the civil, ceremonial and moral law. The moral law only condemns and never offers help to the sinner. Yet in itself the moral law is holy, just and good. The moral law serves to convict of sin. In the New Covenant the elect are at peace with the moral law. Psalm 119 is cited to show that the godly love God's law even though it has such convicting power.

In the endorsements of this book Richard Belcher suggests that this is the clearest and best book on the subject so far. I concur with that assessment. Greg Welty and Steve Wellum have written with cogency on the unity and discontinuity of the Old and New covenants. But this volume excels in sustaining meticulous detailed exposition with readability and power without becoming turgid.

Editor

The Death of the UK

by Bill Muehlenberg

THE HUGE VACUUM CREATED BY THE GROWING SECULARISATION OF THE UK IN PARTICULAR AND THE West in general cannot of course remain as it is. It must be filled with something, and that is exactly what is happening with the rise of Islam. For much of its history the UK was the home of Christianity, and was a major source of Christian missionaries who were sent around the world.

But like most of the West the UK has for quite some time now been becoming less and less Christian and more and more secular. But faith and spirituality and religion are still very important to most people, so instead of folks embracing the vacuous worldview of atheism and secularism, many are turning to what has now become the second largest religion in the UK: Islam.

As of 2011 the total Muslim population there had reached some 2.7 million, or 4.8 per cent of the total population. And it continues to rise. This is largely due to three factors: immigration; demographics (with Muslims having larger families than non-Muslims); and some folks in the UK converting to Islam.

Other figures can be mentioned. Back in 1960 there was one mosque in London. Today there are around 400 in the greater London area. Even more astounding, many of these mosques are former churches. Indeed, the church from which William Carey the ‘father of modern missions’ was sent to be a missionary in India some 220 years ago is now a mosque.

The facts and figures are also buttressed by anecdotal evidence. Consider two recent developments which speak not only of the rise of Islam in the UK, but the slow death of Christianity. The first concerns a church in Scotland which is sharing its worship services with Muslims.

This is not the first time such things have happened in the UK, but it is a disturbing development nonetheless. This is how one news item covers the story: “A church in Scotland opened its doors and welcomed hundreds of Muslims for Friday prayers, reported the BBC. Worshipers from the neighboring Syed Shah Mustafa Jame Masjid Mosque share St. John’s Episcopal Church in Aberdeen with Christians up to five times a day.

“The church’s rector opened his doors to Muslims because many were forced to pray outside on the streets due to lack of space in the mosque. ‘It was a very cold day, like today, and when I walked past the mosque I saw dozens of male worshippers praying outside, on the streets, right near the church,’ Reverend Isaac Poobalan, who grew up in India surrounded by Islam, told the BBC. ‘Their hands and feet were bare and you could see their breath in the freezing cold. Jesus taught his disciples to love your neighbor as yourself and this is something I cannot just preach to my congregation, I had to put it into practice’.”

Now it is of course one thing if any individual Christian wants to look after anyone else, whether feeding them, giving them shelter, and so on. And to an extent churches can do this as well. But to turn a Christian church into some interfaith vehicle in which all religions are basically treated as equals is quite another.

Would the same church allow Satanists to come into their premises and do their thing when the building is not being used? Will it allow atheists to hold their conferences there? Will it open wide its doors to orgiastic sexual religious cults to frolic in the pews on the church’s off days?

The sad thing is, one suspects that they probably would. Forget the distinctiveness of the Christian faith. Forget the exclusive truth claim of Jesus Christ. Let’s all just be one big happy family by playing down any differences we might have, and by playing up the ‘let’s just all get along’ mantra.

Sorry, but I am just not buying this. In Isaiah Yahweh spoke to the prophet saying, ‘I will not share my glory with another’ (Isa 42:8 and

48:11). And when Paul walked through the multi-faith city of Athens, he did not applaud the “religious diversity” on display there, or seek to engage in interfaith dialogue.

Instead we read this: ‘While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols’ (Acts 17:16). He certainly did not think to have a big ecumenical party in the interests of merely getting along. Nor did he endorse the sharing of competing religious worldviews as a way of ‘loving your neighbour’.

The second alarming indication of the rise of Islam comes from Ireland where plans are underway to construct one of the biggest mosques in all of Europe. Here is how the story has been reported: “The Emir of Qatar, who has long cultivated an image as a pro-Western reformist, has vowed to ‘spare no effort’ to spread Wahhabi Islam throughout Europe. Wahhabism – which not only discourages Muslim integration in the West but actively encourages jihad against non-Muslims – threatens to radicalize Muslim immigrants in Ireland.

“City planners in the Irish capital, Dublin, have given the go-ahead for the construction of a sprawling mega-mosque complex that will cater to Ireland’s burgeoning Muslim population. The massive €40 million (\$50 million) ‘Islamic Cultural Center’ will be built on a six-acre site in Clongriffin, a new and as yet unfinished suburb at the northern edge of Dublin.”

Fears about this project are not misplaced: But critics worry that Clongriffin is in danger of becoming an exclusively Islamic suburb on the outskirts of Dublin where Muslims will establish a parallel society rather than integrate. An Islamist website called ‘Islamic Vanguard: Spearheading Ireland’s Transition’ recently warned that greed would be Ireland’s undoing: ‘If there’s one thing the West yearns, it is money. For it has worshipped this false god without fail for as long as they have departed from the worship of the true God. And it is this weakness, nay addiction that will see what they hold precious being wrenched from their spindly hands. Already as we speak vast swathes of the London

metropolis are in Muslim hands, Dublin is set to follow as the wealth that Allah has blessed His servants with is used to reclaim the land for His glory.’

‘In any event, the Clongriffin Mosque will not be the only mega-mosque in town: the new mosque on the northern edge of Dublin will compete with another mega-mosque, located in Clonskeagh on the southern edge of Dublin. The mosque complex at Clonskeagh, which also goes by the name ‘Islamic Cultural Center,’ has been in operation since 1996. Its sprawling four-acre campus was financed by Sheikh Hamdan bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the deputy ruler of Dubai.’

So while Christian churches are disappearing and existing ones are declining in number, we see massive mosques being built in the same vicinities. This is not just a war over real estate, but a war of worldviews. Islam is of course an expansionist religion which aims to see every person fully submit to Allah. It brooks no rivals and views Christianity as an apostate and false religion which cannot coexist with Islam.

At best, because Christians are ‘people of the book’, they can exist in the condition of dhimmitude, or second class citizens – if they are lucky. As we speak, where this policy is already in place, Christian churches and homes are being destroyed all around the Muslim world, from Indonesia to Egypt.

Europeans like Geert Wilders have sought to warn us of these matters, but most of the secular left elites in the West choose to ignore such warnings, while foolishly and gullibly teaming up with the Islamists. This is a recipe for disaster, and it is only a matter of time before we witness the complete disintegration of the Christian West – unless we wake up quickly and start doing something about it.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/en/perspective/features/2013/04/01/Church-in-Scotland-opens-its-doors-to-Muslim-worshippers-.html>

<http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/3654/ireland-mega-mosque>

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