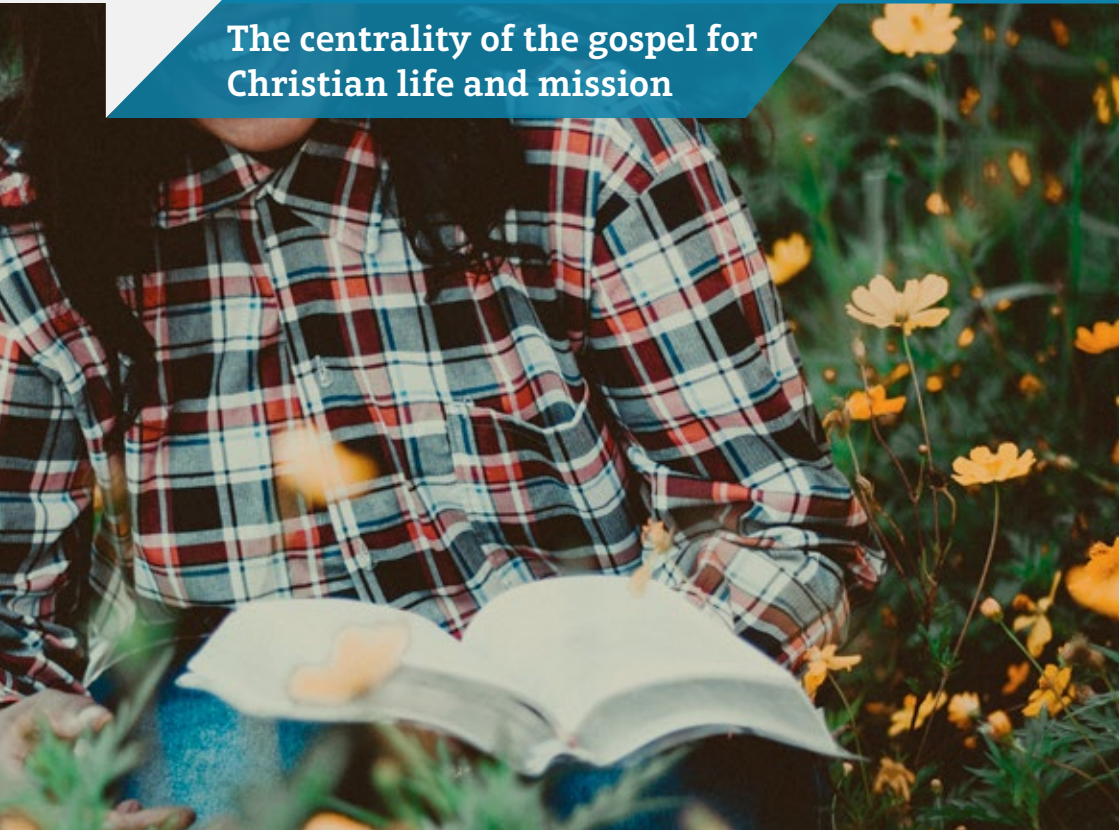


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- ▶ The Manchester Martyr: The heroic story of John Bradford (1510-1555) Part 2

The centrality of the gospel for
Christian life and mission





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Editorial

KEES VAN KRALINGEN

The Centrality of the Gospel for Christian life and mission

The heart of the gospel is found in Jesus Christ and how his death on the cross is the means of our salvation and reconciliation with God (see also *RT 290*). When we study Scripture carefully, this implies more than we sometimes tend to think. We need to be aware of the risk of reducing the gospel. When asked what the gospel is, we sometimes may give a very brief summary such as that Jesus died for our sins and that by believing in him we can be forgiven and get to heaven. In essence, this is true, but the gospel is much more than this.



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If we limit the gospel to such a summary as if this would be all that can be said about it, we create problems. One obvious consequence of such a limitation is that we may think that only non-believing outsiders will need the message of the gospel. As a result, we speak about presenting a gospel message only in some special services in our churches targeted at those who do not yet believe in Christ. But is this what we find in the New Testament?

We read in Ephesians 4:11 that Christ also gave evangelists. For what purpose? Is this only for reaching unbelievers with the gospel? No, the aim is wider and deeper as we read in verse 12 referring also to the task of these evangelists: '...to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.' This ministry encompasses reaching the lost for Christ, but also includes making them disciples of Christ, teaching them to observe all that Christ has commanded (Matt 28:20) and this will build up the church as the body of Christ.

Similarly, we read in Romans 1:11-15 that Paul longs to visit the church in Rome among other things to preach the gospel to them; that is to an existing church of believers.

All of this becomes clear when we study the meaning in Scripture of the words related to 'gospel'. This leads to a description of the gospel as everything that God did in Jesus Christ and in his birth, life, suffering, death, burial, resurrection and ascension in order to

save lost sinners and reconcile them with God, and to transform them to a new life and ultimately to a new humanity living on the new earth and heaven. Once we see this comprehensive nature of the gospel we can easily see why we all still need the gospel!

This gospel is what binds the seemingly very diverse articles in this issue of *RT* together.

Why the church needs the gospel

The gospel is needed to equip the saints and to build up the body of Christ, the church. The church is to reflect the transforming power of the gospel for people to live a new life to the glory of Christ and in order to be a blessing to the world. This transformation is an ongoing process and we are not yet made perfect. We have to be honest and admit that we still face problems among believers and in the churches. This is why we continually need to be taught and corrected. How this should be addressed is the topic of the insightful article by Robert Strivens. He argues that we need something much more rigorous than mere pragmatic troubleshooting and problem solving. Instead, he shows from Paul's first letter to the Corinthian church that we need something much more rigorous in dealing with such problems: 'what is required is a strategic, rather than a merely tactical, approach to addressing them that is theologically unified and rooted deeply in the teaching of the Scriptures.' He illustrates from Paul's letter how he applied this approach.

This underlines that – in the words of Don Carson – 'So much of Christian ethics is tied in one way or another to the gospel.'¹ Many examples can be found in Scripture. Problems in marriage ultimately need the gospel as Paul grounds his teaching on marriage in the gospel (Eph 5:21-33). Paul also gives his instruction regarding giving to fulfil the needs of the poor by referring to the example of Christ's self-sacrificial love and the gospel (2 Cor 9; see especially verses 8 and 13).

Examples of ministry 'to equip the saints' are found in the reports in this issue about teaching pastors from South Sudan and Kenya.

Why the world needs the gospel

The answer to this question is that the whole world is accountable to God but is lost in sin and guilt and under God's judgment, and the gospel is the only effective remedy. We may be inclined to think that with the rapidly increasing spread of modern digital media even to the most faraway places on the globe, everyone should have heard of it. The truth is, however, that up to 40% of the world's population have not yet heard the gospel, the good news of salvation in Christ. Keith Underhill provides a penetrating analysis of the task still ahead of us with practical advice

to stimulate us to put more effort into it. Too little of our resources is dedicated to reaching the unreached for Christ. This article is an urgent and inspiring call to all of us to reconsider our priorities. We should realise that the unreached are very close to us, thus involving all of us wherever we are (see also the book review in this issue).

TOO LITTLE OF OUR RESOURCES IS DEDICATED TO REACHING THE UNREACHED FOR CHRIST. THIS ARTICLE IS AN URGENT AND INSPIRING CALL TO ALL OF US TO RECONSIDER OUR PRIORITIES.

Our attitude to this gospel ministry

Finally, this view of the gospel also determines our attitude to gospel ministry. This is the lesson for us from the life of John Bradford as described by Oliver Allmand-Smith in part 2 of this brief biography. The gospel humbles us as we realise that all of what we as undeserving sinners have received is by grace alone. At the same time, we can proclaim this gospel with conviction as it is based on the truth as it is in Jesus

Christ, and as we have experienced its power for salvation. This humble conviction inevitably generates in us real compassion to let the gospel shine its light for the people in this dark world.

When we think of the gospel in all its depths and riches, we can join Paul and say: 'Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift' (2 Cor 9:15). May our Lord bless us all in the ministry of this gospel of Jesus Christ for his glory. ■

¹ D A Carson, *For the Love of God, Vol 2* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1999), Meditation for March 10.



Paul's theological approach to pastoral care

The congregation of Grace Church, Everytown is outgrowing its building. Should it look for somewhere bigger or split into two or more services? Alex Jones (not his real name) has just finished his first year at university and has come to his pastor confessing a serious problem with internet pornography. How should the pastor advise him? Mrs Brown used to come regularly to church, but is now a widow in a nursing home, unable to get out and with no nearby family to visit her. What should the church do to help her? Pastors and elders will be very familiar with these kinds of issues – they face them constantly and have to address them somehow. How are such issues to be addressed? It is to be feared that responses may often be determined primarily by the purely practical – what will work – together with the application of a few fairly obvious biblical texts and passages – what does the Bible say that Christians should do in circumstances like these – often tinged with a sense of urgency to have the problem resolved and out of the way to enable the next issue to be addressed.

This article argues that a more foundational approach to problem-solving and trouble-shooting in the church is needed. The range of issues and challenges that church leaders face is huge: what is required is a strategic, rather than a merely tactical, approach to addressing them that is theologically unified and rooted deeply in the teaching of the Scriptures. If the leaders in Christ's

church are to discharge their duties biblically, then before coming to the individual challenges that come our way, some thorough, Bible-based theology is needed.

A useful way of exploring this subject will be by way of an examination of the methodology which the apostle Paul adopted in some of the various difficulties that he faced in the Corinthian church. There were many different problems in Corinth, including division and factionalism, false leaders, disorder in meetings, issues to do with food, idolatry and sexual issues. This article will consider, from 1 Corinthians, how Paul addressed two of these problems – factionalism and sexual issues. It will be seen that, behind all the problems that Paul encountered in

church life lay, in his diagnosis, some fundamental theological issues which had to be addressed first if the practical and spiritual issues were to be satisfactorily resolved – satisfactorily, that is, in the eyes of Christ. It would have been easier, perhaps, to apply some purely practical, non-theological solutions to close the problem down, by simply cancelling out the troublemaker's influence, for instance. But that would not have satisfied Paul – it may have been apparently easier and quicker, and possibly more effective, but in reality the true issues would have remained unaddressed, and would be likely to break out with even greater ferocity and cause even more harm to Christ's church than the original issue.

Before coming to the individual challenges that come our way, some thorough, Bible-based theology is needed.

Background to Paul's Corinth

Corinth in Paul's day was a prosperous business centre where people, even liberated slaves, could make money quickly and publicise their new-found importance. In the market place of Corinth, there was a fountain with a bronze figure of Poseidon. Under Poseidon's feet was a dolphin spouting water, on the base of which was an inscription identifying a man named Gnaeus Babbius Philinus as the donor of the structure. Beside the fountain was another structure with the same inscription at top and bottom, making clear that it was this same Babbius who had paid for and, as magistrate, had authorised its construction. Babbius may well have been a freed slave who had risen to a position of wealth and influence in the city. His self-promotion was by no means unusual. Ben Witherington writes, 'The number of such inscriptions is staggering. Corinth was a city where public boasting and self-promotion had become an art form.'¹

Ancient Corinth had expansive leisure facilities (baths) and sporting events (the Isthmian Games, for which there were sophisticated facilities, including equipment for starting races on a curved track), and a variety of high-class cultural activities (poetry, music). These attracted large crowds which brought in substantial revenue to the city. Substantial effort went into promoting these events and attracting tourists – coins were issued portraying

the Games, for example. Corinth was also a busy port, 'the central crossroads for Mediterranean trade going east and west',² requiring all kinds of activities and facilities and again bringing in visitors, money and commerce. The city was an important centre for the production of bronze and goods made from bronze, as well as pottery and specialised marble sculpture. In such an environment, self-advancement was made relatively easy through the constant movement of peoples, a fluid and expanding economy and liquidity of funds.

It was also a city where idolatry and sexual promiscuity were rife. These came together in the cult of Aphrodite, the goddess of love, who had at least three temples dedicated to her in Corinth. The cult of Asclepius, god of healing, was also important – clay moulds of a range of body parts were left behind in the god's temples, indicating the reasons for visits. Facilities were provided at the temples for relaxing, exercising and stimulation. Cultic activities at these sites would often involve convivial meals at which sexual immorality would commonly form a part.

Finally, Corinth was a city where those trained in rhetorical skills could ply their trade, providing rhetorical displays of great force and persuasion with high entertainment value and charging for their services. The aim of such displays, from the speaker's viewpoint, was the admiration and applause of the hearers.

There would have been a competitive spirit evident among the different orators in a town. Citizens of Corinth would have prided themselves on their abilities to assess the rhetorical skill of an orator. These focused on his gifts and abilities in speaking and his ability to sway the emotions, reaching into the sensitivities and prejudices of his hearers successfully, rather than concerning himself with the truth of his arguments.³ For the Corinthians, the rhetorical impact of a message mattered more than its truth: 'public recognition [in Corinth] was often more important than facts ... the worst thing that could happen was for one's reputation to be publicly tarnished. In such a culture a person's sense of worth is based on recognition by others of one's accomplishments, hence [again] the self-promoting public inscriptions.'⁴

Clearly, some, at least, of the problems that Paul faced in the Corinthian church – factions, self-promotion, a celebrity culture, as well as sexual immorality – were, at least in part, an outworking of the cultural context in which the Corinthian church was situated. Paul was not simply facing the common outworking of human sin in the various issues that he was compelled to address in his Corinthian letters – though he was certainly doing that; he was more specifically addressing the way in which

the lifestyle and mind-set of the world which the Corinthian Christians inhabited had been carried over with them into the church and their behaviour towards one another in that context. At root, the Corinthians were bringing their worldly habits of thought, attitude and motive into the church. It was these, first of all,

At root, the Corinthians were bringing their worldly habits of thought, attitude and motive into the church.

that needed to be reformed and reshaped by the Word of God and that is therefore where Paul first aims his teaching in the Corinthian correspondence.

That is what Paul had to face – and pastors and elders today need to face the equivalent issues in the churches of their own time and culture. How did Paul deal with it? How do church leaders today address those characteristics of their churches where the congregation is simply living

out in church life the cultural norms of the day? This article will examine two of the issues which Paul addresses in his first letter to the Corinthian church: factionalism and sexual conduct.

Factionalism: 1 Corinthians chapters 1 to 4

Because of the cultural norms in Corinth, as has been seen, the Corinthian Christians were used to a culture of celebrity, in which one hero would be championed at the expense of all other potential heroes. That seems to be what the Corinthian Christians were doing,

¹ Ben Witherington III, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1995), p7.

² Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, p9.

³ Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, p47.

⁴ Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, p8.

treating Paul, Peter, Apollos and even Christ as heroes in this way. Obviously the approval of the chosen hero was not required for this to happen – the blame for the resulting factionalism did not lie at the door of the various leaders named, in this instance. The Christians in Corinth were transferring into the church and its view of its leadership the attitudes and ways of behaving that they were used to in life generally in their culture. How did Paul address this?

Chloe's people had informed Paul of *erides*, 'contentions', in the church (1 Cor 1:11). The word refers to rivalry, where those involved take different positions on some question or issue. It can be translated 'quarrels'. It indicates a situation of strife or discord. It was a factor in the troubles that Paul experienced in prison, at the hands of contentious Christians, probably in Rome, when he wrote to the Philippian church (Phil 1:15), where the word appears alongside *phthonos*, envy. Paul warns against it in his letters to the Romans (13:13) and the Galatians (5:20, with words like *ecthrai*, hostilities; *zēlos*, jealousy; *thumoi*, anger; *eritheiai*, selfishness; see also 2 Corinthians 12:20 for a similar combination of words), where it is included in the list of the works of the flesh, as well as in the pastoral epistles (1 Tim 6:4, where it is associated with false teaching; see also Tit 3:9, where it is associated with people who are divisive). In 1 Corinthians itself, Paul identifies this, along with *zēlos*, as clear evidence of a fleshly, unspiritual (*sarkikos*) way of life (3:3).

Already, this survey of the use of the word is instructive: it demonstrates that Paul

understood the root of the problem to be spiritual – the fruit of the flesh, not of the Holy Spirit – and one that manifests itself in the company of other unspiritual activities, including false teaching and divisiveness. Paul did not put this down to difficult personalities or the particular temperaments of individuals. Nor did he excuse it on the grounds that difficult questions are involved on which it could only be expected that people would disagree. Paul's view of *erides* is that they are the work of the flesh, the consequence of a wholly unspiritual approach. As we shall see, this is the foundation on which his response to the *erides* in Corinth was built.

He starts, in verses 10-17, with the theme of unity: the need to be of one mind (v10), and the unity and unique saving role of Christ, who is central and indivisible (v13). Paul addresses the church on this issue, from the start, 'through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ' (v10). He puts his entire argument on a Christian, spiritual footing. He reminds them of their unity in Christ: Christ is one and indivisible (1:13), so why do divisions appear to be forming in the Corinthian church? Note how Paul takes the issue back to Christ himself in verse 13. It is only brief, but it is telling. Paul's thinking on this issue is already deeply theological. It is not merely a question of resolving differences between personalities in the church – perhaps setting up some kind of elder-led mediation between the different factions. Paul penetrates to the root of the matter. He brings to bear fundamental, vital points of Christian doctrine – in this case, reminding the church that they belong to Christ who cannot be divided, a theme

which he will pick up on later in the letter, in chapters 12 to 14, when he comes to deal with spiritual gifts.

Paul raises a second issue in relation to the factionalism that was plaguing the church. In 1:17, he speaks of how he was called, not to baptise, but to preach, and in that context drops in the phrase, 'not with words of eloquent wisdom'. He follows this with his famous defence of preaching Christ crucified (1:18–2:16), before returning to the subject of the divisions caused by their factionalism in chapter 3. The cultural background to this, as already seen, is the Corinthian love of impressive rhetoric which sounded impressive but perhaps did not contain very much substance. The Corinthians loved to promote their favourite orators, paying them handsomely for the privilege. Again, the Corinthian Christians seem to have carried something of this over into church life and their view of their preachers – the more flashy the rhetoric, the more charismatic the speaker, the more they loved it. How does Paul respond?

Paul does not simply castigate the church for its worldly attitudes. Nor does he merely explain that biblical preaching is not like that, urging on them that what happens in church is just different from what they expect in the world. He goes much deeper, to the very nature of the gospel itself. He tackles the problem of false expectations in preaching by taking

his readers to the cross (1:18). He discerns that, underneath the factionalism and championing of different preachers, lies the issue of power (1:18). He shows that there is indeed power in the gospel (1:24–25; 2:4–5). It is not that Paul is uninterested in power, but where does power lie in gospel-preaching? Not in the rhetorical tricks and impressive 'wisdom', so-called, of the Corinthian orators, but in the apparent weakness of gospel preachers. Drawn mostly from the ranks of the poor and uninfluential, not from

the intellectuals and elites, they preach a message that is folly to some and offensive to others (1:23). This is because their message is rooted in the cross of Christ, which is foolish and offensive to all who are not enlightened by the Holy Spirit (2:14). Those who wanted their preachers to be attractive to all comers had failed to understand the very nature of the gospel itself, which focuses on a rejected, crucified Messiah, a figure of utter weakness and shame. Yet it is precisely there, argues Paul, that true power lies.

And it is the true content of the gospel message, in all its apparent folly, weakness and offence, which God in his wisdom is pleased to bless, not the antics of the Corinthian orators, however pleasing and attractive they may be.

Once again, Paul's response to the urgent pastoral problem at Corinth is profound. He identifies the root of the problem and, at root, finds that it is theological – the Corinthians have failed to work through in their minds the implications for their view of their preachers which flow from the central gospel truths of the cross and of a crucified Saviour. That is what Paul needs to address with them, therefore, if he is to lance the boil of the factionalism

that is threatening to destroy the unity of the church. So he demonstrates that, in preaching, true power lies, not in the impressive display or the attractive presentation, but in the apparent foolishness and offence of the message preached. Power in preaching depends utterly upon God – as he shows in the second half of chapter 2, specifically in the work of the Holy Spirit enlightening the darkened minds of sinners to enable them to see and grasp the mystery of the gospel message. And it is the true content of the gospel message, in all its apparent folly, weakness and offence, which God in his wisdom is pleased to bless, not the antics of the Corinthian orators, however pleasing and attractive they may be.

Thirdly, then, on this issue of factionalism, Paul goes on to address the problem more directly, in chapter 3. He tells the Corinthian Christians that they are like infants, not adults. He accuses them of being prey to jealousy and strife (v3) and of being ‘merely human’. He goes on to show them that they have failed to understand the nature of gospel ministry, that ministers are, not celebrities, but servants (v5). They are simply doing what they are told, men under instruction. They sow and water, but it is God who gives the increase. The argument is an extension of that of chapter 2, but it is a powerful one all the same. It applies the theological principles of chapter 2 in a telling manner to the Corinthians’ own situation, as Paul names himself and Apollos specifically (v6). He uses a number of analogies to drive his point home – agricultural (vv6-9), construction (vv10-15) and the Old Testament temple (vv16-17), before summing up his

argument with a strong warning about paying heed to worldly wisdom (vv18-23). His main point is that, once again, the Corinthians have carried over into the church their cultural norms, whereby preachers are seen as celebrity speakers competing for power and prestige among the Corinthian church and the church is responding according to those norms by arguing and fighting among themselves as to which preacher is the best. They have completely misunderstood the biblical nature of Christian leadership and submitted instead to worldly cultural norms.

Paul wants them to understand, rather, that Christian leadership is all about servanthood, not power and prestige. Power comes from God alone. The church is built upon the foundation of Jesus Christ and he judges each person’s work. The church is the place where God’s very Spirit lives, so those who serve it must be very careful not to defile or destroy it. They must not, says Paul, deceive themselves (v18). In other words, their attitudes to and thoughts about their leaders and preachers must be based on biblical truth, not cultural norms. Those norms must, in the church, be reformed and reshaped by a biblical theology.

So we see that Paul has responded to Corinthian factionalism with three strands of theologically-rooted argument:

- » Christ is indivisible and so his church must be united.
- » The gospel is rooted in the weakness, offence and apparent foolishness of the cross of Jesus Christ and all its power comes from God alone, working

by his Spirit in the darkened hearts and minds of sinners; rhetorical tricks and celebrity charisma have no place here.

- » Church leaders are not celebrities competing for favour and applause, but servants under the authority of Christ, engaged in the holy work of building his temple, which is the dwelling place of his Holy Spirit.

Paul does not leave it there, of course, but goes on in chapter 4 to apply these principles to the Corinthians very specifically. Was Paul’s approach successful? It would seem not, at least not entirely, judging by his second letter to the Corinthians. It is true that the problem addressed in that letter is not factionalism as between Peter, Paul and Apollos. The problems are caused, not by faithful gospel preachers, but false teachers whom Paul calls ‘super-apostles’. We see the problem revealed in full in the closing four chapters of that letter. These men were setting themselves up in opposition to Paul’s leadership and had been trying to undermine the apostle’s authority with the Corinthians. They accused Paul of weakness in speech and leadership, changing his mind as to his plans to visit the church. The letter is Paul at his most emotional, as he seeks to demonstrate the utterly ungodly manner in which these self-appointed leaders were conducting themselves and to re-establish his own apostolic authority with the Corinthians. So the problem which Paul addressed in his first letter – that of celebrity culture inherited from Corinthian cultural norms – seems to have continued, though in a different guise, in the issues which he had to

address in the second letter. And judging from the post-apostolic letter which Clement of Rome sent to the church at Corinth, probably towards the end of the first century, the problem continued to manifest itself even after Paul’s death and the close of the New Testament canon.

In other words, this approach is not guaranteed to succeed. The church is made up of sinners and apart from the grace of God they will not respond to biblical truth. Nevertheless, that is what pastors and elders are called to dispense. The solutions that they seek to implement to address the difficulties of church life must be soundly rooted in a biblical theology. It is the root theological problems that are to be dealt with, of which the practical difficulties are simply a manifestation, otherwise the problem will not truly be addressed at all. This can be illustrated, more briefly, by a second group of issues which Paul faced in the Corinthian church, that of sexual behaviour.

Sexual conduct: 1 Corinthians chapters 5 to 7

If there is one area of life today in which church leaders well know that people in their church face severe struggles, it is that of sexual temptation and sin. Whether it is internet pornography, adulterous relationships or homosexual temptation, they will be well aware that some in their congregation will be experiencing difficulties in these areas – and that they themselves may be struggling too. Reading Paul’s instructions in this area in 1 Corinthians chapters 5 to 7, the temptation again is to simply read off the surface a set of rules or principles

as to how to deal with each individual set of circumstances. However, once again, the need is to dig deeper and discover the theological principles which underlie Paul's teaching.

Three separate issues face Paul in these chapters. There is the man who is sleeping with his mother-in-law; there are those in the church who see nothing wrong with visiting prostitutes; and there are various questions about the marriage relationship. The temptation might be simply to issue instructions appropriate to each set of circumstances – essentially, in the first two cases, to tell them to stop and in the case of marriage relationships provide some more detailed instruction. Paul does in fact do this, but not without addressing underlying issues as well.

Paul sees, as we might not, that there is a common theological theme linking these three sets of issues in the Corinthian church. The heart of the matter can perhaps be found in 6:13, where Paul asserts, 'The body ... is for the Lord and the Lord for the body.' It seems that some in the church had not understood this vital truth, concerning the relationship between the Lord and the body, or, in more philosophical terms, between the material/physical and the spiritual. They had, it would seem, bought into the idea, which became common a little later among the Gnostics, that the physical/material, including the body, was inherently undesirable, unspiritual and evil. With the Gnostics, this twisted idea about the physical realm led in one of two directions. For some, it led to asceticism: a rejection, to the extent physically possible, of the material in favour of the pursuit of

the spiritual. So, for the Christian believer, this might mean an excessive degree of time be given to prayer, fasting and other spiritual pursuits and a substantial neglect of the needs of the body. In the context that Paul is addressing here, this means, specifically, a rejection of sexual activity. This can be seen in the opening verses of chapter 7, where Paul appears to quote from the Corinthians' letter to him (v1). Abstinence from sex, on this view, is inherently a good thing.

The other view went in the opposite direction. Because what matters is the spiritual and not the physical, it is argued that there is complete freedom to do anything with the body. This led then, not to asceticism, but to licence. This appears to have been the problem in chapters 5 and 6. In chapter 5, the church was not taking seriously the very serious sin of the man in verse 1 – a sin so serious that not even unbelievers countenance it. Yet, says Paul, the church does so: it is arrogant (v2), whereas they ought to be in mourning. They need to take action to cut out the gangrene in their midst. In chapter 6, the same principle is seen working itself out in relation to prostitutes. 'All things are lawful for me,' quotes Paul, again, from their letter. 'Food for the stomach and the stomach for food.' This is pure Gnosticism – the body is of no significance, except for eating, so let's do what we please with it, including going in to prostitutes. Paul refutes this idea with a shocking picture, of joining the members of Christ to a prostitute (v15). This is what you are effectively doing, he says, as the bodies of believers (note that he specifically says 'bodies', v15) are members of Christ. It is quite wrong, says Paul by implication, to

think that bodies don't matter because they are physical, not spiritual. On the contrary, 'the body is ... for the Lord and the Lord for the body'. From the following verse, he seems here to be referring to, among other things, the incarnation of the second person of the Trinity. In other words, if the deity can unite himself to a human body, what possible grounds do we have for saying that the body is of no spiritual significance? If God raised Jesus from the dead (v14), and is going to raise us too, does that not strongly indicate that God cares about the physical body? He is its creator, after all.

So, where church leaders might stumble about providing merely practical prescriptions and suggestions as to how to deal with these different instances of sexual sin, Paul goes, again, to the heart of the issue and puts his finger on the underlying theological problem: a wrong view of the body – with some leading to asceticism, with others to licence, but in both cases, the underlying issue is the same. Having done this, Paul applies the principle in the different cases. He does provide practical instruction – very clear and precise. The man in chapter 5 is to be subject to church discipline. Those thinking of visiting prostitutes must stop, absolutely. And in relation to marriage, a host of varying instructions are provided in chapter 7. He enforces his teaching with striking language – the need to cleanse out the old leaven (5:8); the image of joining Christ to a prostitute, already noted (6:15); and various pictures and analogies in chapter 7, in order to drive his points home. But all are rooted in the underlying theological issue which he identified.

Conclusions

This article has sought to show how Paul tackled the serious problems which he was facing in the Corinthian church, of factionalism and sexual immorality. His methodology has been analysed:

- » He identified the spiritual problem.
- » He addressed this problem theologically.
- » He then, and only then, drew out the practical lessons and applied them to the church.

It is worth noting in this connection that Paul addressed his letter, not to the elders or church officers, but to the whole church. (1:2). This is vital. He understood that the lessons that he wanted them to learn would be heard and implemented only if all God's people in that place heard them and grasped them for themselves. Paul does not shy away from this on the grounds that he is tackling the issues, firstly, from a theological base, rather than simply handing out a list of practical instructions. He believes that the whole church needs to hear what he has to say on the theology as well as on the practical instruction. Theology, therefore, is not just for the minister, or for the elders or other church leaders. It is for all, for every believer.

In doing so, Paul was particularly aware of the cultural norms and pressures of the society in which the Corinthian believers lived. He recognised that the believers had brought many of the attitudes and motivations prevalent in their society more generally into the church. He saw that he needed to tackle these head on. That would not be done by simply

issuing some practical instructions or agreeing a way forward that addressed only the surface symptoms. The issues needed to be addressed at the foundational level, by means of a good dose of theology. Ben Witherington puts it in this way, using somewhat technical language: 'Paul attempts in his letters to further his converts' resocialization by deinculturating them from some of their former primary values, chiefly by invoking certain eschatological ideas and the ethical implications of those ideas'.⁵ In other words, for Paul, says Witherington, the following process needs to be followed:

- » 'deinculturation from primary values': ie detaching the Corinthian Christians from the cultural norms prevalent in Corinth (eg orators should be flashy and charismatic)
- » 'resocialization': ie giving them something cohesive and coherent to put in place of those cultural norms; this involves:
- » a biblical theology and worldview ('eschatology') (eg Christian preaching is rooted in the weakness of a crucified Saviour), and
- » practical instruction ('ethical implications') (eg stop dividing into factions over your favourite preacher).

For pastors and elders seeking to care for their own congregations today, this means:

1. thinking hard about their own society – what are its cultural norms of attitude, assumption and behaviour and how do these manifest

themselves in the church?

2. developing a theological, biblical worldview which can effectively substitute for those norms, to the extent that they are unbiblical;
3. working out the practical implications in a fairly precise and specific manner; and
4. teaching this to all the church.

This is hard work. In a sense, it is far easier just to reach for the nearest most obvious practical steps to meet whatever issues are current in the church. But this article has argued, from Paul's example, that this is not sufficient. Church leaders need to develop a sound set of biblical and theological principles, attitudes and truths to replace those which today's ungodly society constantly feeds the members of their congregations. They must develop ways of teaching these things effectively to their congregations, trusting that God by his Holy Spirit will enlighten the church to receive and grasp a more biblical way of looking at the world and themselves and so to live more to the glory of Christ. And they need then, but only then, to work out for and with their congregations how that theology works out in practice in their Christian lives today. May God help us in this challenging, but essential task. ■

This paper was first delivered at an Elders' Day at the John Owen Centre for Theological Studies (now the Pastors' Academy) at London Seminary in 2015.

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KEITH UNDERHILL



THE UNREACHED

A personal burden

⁵ Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, p8.

Introduction

I have a burden to share with you. It arises partly from my own experience, having had the privilege of being involved with 'The Unreached'.

Soon after my conversion in 1964 I wanted to spend my life in what is now South Sudan as I heard that the vast majority of people there were totally without the gospel. I had been confronted with the world of missions through the Christian Union bookstall where the word 'Sudan' stared out at me in a couple of books through which I was browsing. The country was closed to the gospel in 1965 when all missionaries were expelled.

I had the opportunity post-graduation to teach in a school in Kenya from 1968-1970 just south of the forbidding north of Kenya that starts at Isiolo, a sort of 'frontier town'. During that time I did all I could to travel up north, where I knew there were few if any Christians. So when I was able to acquire a Land Rover, I went to Garba Tulla, Lake Turkana and Marsabit, and even over to north Uganda (Kitgum) to the border with Sudan, just 'to get a glance!' On completion of my contract I took the opportunity to visit missionary work in Ethiopia and Sudan (Khartoum). However, the typical mission compound set-up was not appealing to me. After three years at seminary, the Lord opened up the way for me to serve in Kenya from 1975 for 40 years, with the aim of planting a Reformed and Baptist Church in Nairobi from where there have been contacts all over the country and beyond. All the time I had an eye fixed on the north of Kenya, then known as the 'Northern Frontier District' (NFD).

In the mid-1990s God brought us into contact with nascent work among the Pokot, and with the Somali and Rendille people, few of whom had ever heard the saving gospel. I count it one of the great privileges of my life to have gone where Christ was not named and tell some for the first time about the Saviour. Conversely it has been one of my greatest disappointments not to see the needed labourers to harvest in that field (especially the Rendille), a field that even today is totally open. It became a great burden to think that within a day's drive there are people who have never heard the gospel and there is no hindrance to taking it to them.

Let me give you some details about these three groups of people (you may read my previous article on *The Providence of God and Missions* for how the Lord brought me into contact with them; see RT 289).

- » *The Pokot of north-west Kenya.* The numbers of people who speak the Pokot language are not far short of a million. In the north part of West Pokot County, ie north and west of the Turkwell (Suam) River, Christianity is recent. Despite the rise in the number of churches in the last 20 years there are many yet to hear. There are 13 churches affiliated with Trinity Baptist Church, Nairobi, with a total of about 200 baptised converts.
- » *The Somali of the Horn of Africa.* There are about 29 million Somalis, most in Somalia (15M), south-east Ethiopia (8M), and north-east Kenya (3M). There is little or no overt

Christian presence because of Muslim opposition. A few have become Christians and are reaching out to their own people through radio and the internet. The vast majority are totally unreached with the gospel.

- » *The Rendille of north-central Kenya.* Twenty years ago 90% of the now 60,000 Rendille people had never heard the gospel. There are now a number of churches at work but the traditional men remain very resistant to the gospel. Trinity Baptist Church has planted a small church in the main centre of Korr with three untrained evangelists, and recently sent a 'missionary' to labour alongside them.

A burden from Scripture

The burden arises more fundamentally from the Scriptures. We know that our Lord died to ransom sinners out of every tribe, language, people and nation (Rev 5:9, 7:9). These four groups obviously basically overlap, and although the precise definitions may be difficult, the impression in piling up these four words is inescapable – no group of people anywhere in the world (four as the number of universality?) is excluded from the saving purposes of God and the atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ. Its fulfilment is tied to Christ's prediction that 'this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world

as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come' (Matt 24:14). In some way the return of Christ is dependent upon the evangelisation of the nations. This then becomes our express responsibility. We dare not hide behind the sovereignty of God. For the God who has predestined the

goal, has also foreordained the means to reach that goal. And that is the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20).

NO GROUP OF PEOPLE ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD IS EXCLUDED FROM THE SAVING PURPOSES OF GOD AND THE ATONEMENT OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

What is meant by 'unreached'?

Popularly, it obviously means that the gospel has not reached such people. In the days before the mass printing of literature, radio, and now the internet, it was easier to locate such. But now there are so many ways the gospel can 'reach' without a person being physically present to speak it. There is Brother N in his little room, his internet chat room opened on Facebook and 600+ following him live as he talks

about the gospel. Brother A broadcasts and all over the Middle East and the Horn of Africa people are listening where no messenger could physically dare go (even Mecca!). But many in Liverpool, right around where I live, many never actually have heard! Of course, they do have the opportunity with many churches around them where the truth is preached.

So more technically, in order to get a grip on the real situation in the world, two things have been put forward by missiologists concerned with the reality of unreached peoples:



**A STAGGERING
40% OF THE
WORLD'S
POPULATION IS
'UNREACHED'!**

(1) Over the last 50 years the unreached are now being defined in terms of 'people groups' (ethno-linguistic), not countries or regions, with about 16,000 such groups in the world (depending on the precise definition).

(2) Specific criteria are given to define whether a people group is unreached or not. Here is one definition: 'A people group within which there is no indigenous community of believing Christians is able to evangelise this group'. In terms of numbers this is taken to mean there are fewer than 2% evangelicals in the group, and fewer than 5% professing Christians.

If this definition is taken then a staggering 40% of the world's population is 'unreached'!

'In terms of population, over three billion people (out of a total world population of seven billion) are in unreached people groups, and almost a billion of those are members of unengaged unreached people groups. That means that almost half of the population of the world has no access to the gospel, and there is no one even trying to reach a third of those' (<https://www.imb.org/topic/explore-missions/missions-and-world-today/lesson-1-unreached-and-unengaged-people-groups>).

Examples would be the 1M Qashqai of Iran (made famous by Nissan), and the 135M Shaikh of Bangladesh. And we can go on and on.

What is God's plan for all the peoples of the world?

(I am indebted to John Piper at <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/unreached-peoples>.)

There are two possible emphases for mission strategy:

(1) To reach as many individuals as possible throughout the world, so we would naturally go where we are invited, and to the most receptive.

(2) To target groups of people (nations, people groups) where there is no church, even no mission attempted.

The predominant emphasis used to be on the first, but much attention is now being paid to the second. This is supported by the biblical data that follows.

1. God's plan fulfilled

The last book of the Bible, Revelation, reveals the end of the process of God's plan of redemption. What is it that John sees in heaven? He sees the Lamb and the great multitude for whom he died.

And they sang a new song, saying, 'Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation' (Rev 5:9).

'After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in

white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" (Rev 7:9-10, see also 14:6; 15:4).

In both quotations the multitude are described with four words.

- » 'Tribe' (*phulē*) = a people of common descent, such as the 12 tribes of Israel (Rev 7:4-8).
- » 'Language' (*glōssa*) = a people as a linguistic unity, so speaking a common language (Acts 2:11).
- » 'People' (*laos*) = a political unity with a common history and constitution, especially God's chosen people Israel (Acts 3:23), then the church (1 Peter 2:9).
- » 'Nation' (*ethnos*) = the most general word, so with the weakest meaning. In the singular it refers to a people or nation (Luke 7:5, 21:10). In the plural it can also refer to the Gentiles, ie those who are not Jews (Acts 13:48, 1 Cor 12:2).

In conclusion, the whole of humanity can be viewed in a number of ways, either as a vast number of tribes, or of languages, or of peoples, or of nations. Note the emphasis on 'all' and 'every'. Whether representing different kinds of people, different families, different ethnicities, different nations, different languages, different cultures, etc, in each and every one there are those redeemed by Christ. It is a most powerful statement of particular redemption. It is 'from' or 'out of' every one of the groups that the saved

are ransomed. Therefore, it is the task of the church to gather in the ransomed from every tribe/language/people/nation; to reach more and more of such groups until there are converts from them all. How important it is therefore to target such as are 'unreached'.

2. God's plan begun

It seems to have been God's plan from the beginning that as the population grew it would divide into separate families/peoples/nations. So even before Babel is recorded we find what has been called 'a table of nations' (Gen 10).

'And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling-place' (Acts 17:26, see also Deut 32:8).

Babel was a human attempt to live in one place and not be dispersed throughout the earth. It was thwarted by God in 'confusing' their language, so that they no longer spoke the same language. God's plan was then to choose one man, Abraham, and from his family bring blessing to 'all the families of the earth' (Gen 12:3; 28:14). Elsewhere the promise is reiterated as to 'all the nations of the earth' (Gen 18:18; 22:18; 26:4). The thought is not just everyone, but all the inhabitants of the earth as made up of families or nations. This promise is quoted twice in the New Testament.

'You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, "And in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed."' (Acts 3:25 'families' is *patriai*,

a sub-group of society, often a clan or tribe.)

'And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed"' (Gal 3:8 quoting Gen 18:18, 'nations' is *ethnē*, and the same word is translated 'Gentiles' in the first part of the verse).

There are adumbrations of fulfilment throughout the Old Testament in Rahab the Canaanite, Ruth the Moabitess, Ittai the Gittite (2 Sam 15:18-22), Naaman the Syrian (2 Kings 5), the Ninevites at the preaching of Jonah, etc. Then there are so many prophecies about the salvation of the nations, one of the most remarkable being Isaiah 19:23-25:

'In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria, and Assyria will come into Egypt, and Egypt into Assyria, and the Egyptians will worship with the Assyrians. In that day Israel will be the third with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth, whom the LORD of hosts has blessed, saying, "Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my inheritance."'

Jesus said he had only come to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matt 10:6), but at the Great Commission, after his resurrection, it becomes to 'all nations' (*ethnē*) (28:19), the very same language as in the Patriarchal promise. Luke writes 'to the end of the earth' (Acts 1:8), a phrase which is often parallel with 'nations/peoples' (as in Ps 2:8; 22:27; 67:5-7; Is 52:10, Zech 9:10).

God's plan was always global. But the inhabitants of the earth are not seen as one undistinguished mass, but as made up of families, of nations. Representatives of each will know the blessing of redemption.

3. God's plan worked out

This emphasis on 'peoples' is seen in the task for which Paul was commissioned (see Acts 9:15; 26:17-18) where 'Gentiles' = *ethnē* (plural). He specifically finds the worship of Gentiles as fulfilling the promises to the patriarchs:

'For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written, "Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles, and sing to your name"' (Rom 15:8-9).

Four subsequent quotations from the Old Testament show a mind saturated with thoughts of the 'Gentiles' (*ethnē*) (vv 9-12). Note in verse 11 the parallelism between 'Gentiles' and 'all the peoples'. The Gentiles, the uncircumcised (non-Jews), are made up of many peoples (*laoi*), all of which will take part in praising him.

Paul goes on to make the amazing declaration that he has 'fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ' (v19) from Jerusalem to Illyricum (to the north-west of Greece). For Christ had

been named there. How could this possibly be true after just a couple of decades and over such a vast area? He obviously cannot be thinking of having

One of the goals of evangelism and missions must be to win souls and plant biblical churches in as many unreached peoples as possible.

reached every individual. Paul considered his work was done in an area when converts had been won, local churches established, leaders set in place (see Acts 14:23), so that the work would carry on without him. He clearly writes, 'I no longer have any room for work in these regions' (v23). His sights were set on where Christ had not yet been named, where no one had yet preached the gospel. Whether he considered Gentiles (v18) just as non-Jews, or as made up of (non-Jewish) nations, he

felt a necessity to go further and further away, now to Spain (v24). It is notable and probably significant that this letter to the Romans starts and ends with emphasis on 'all the nations' (*ethnē*, 1:5; 16:26). It is not just people in general, but as made up of various nations or peoples. To each one the gospel must be preached.

Conclusion: One of the goals of evangelism and missions must be to win souls and plant biblical churches in as many unreached peoples as possible. Although efforts have been made (as above), it is not really possible to define 'unreached' statistically. But surely where there is a large group of people (tens of thousands to millions) who uniquely share a language and a culture and yet there are no Christians and no one seeking to bring

the gospel – they are unreached! For example, the Rendille of north-central Kenya, have a unique language and culture, and very many cannot speak any other language. Then since Christ has ransomed people for God from every tribe and language it is our responsibility to go to them.

Various questions have arisen as regards knowing exactly who the unreached are:

- » The unreached have tended to be seen as only rural, yet now 50% of the world is urban and increasing and there are many among them who qualify as unreached. Nubians in the large slum of Kibera in Nairobi are regarded as unreached, for example.
- » What about places that were once reached such as North Africa? Do we now class them as unreached as there are almost no Christians there?
- » When is a people reached? Is it when the gospel is preached, or when there are a certain number of converts or churches, or when there are indigenous leaders?

There may well be different answers to these questions, yet the goal is unchanged. It is to take the gospel of Christ to every tribe, language, people and nation, that from each some might be saved. God has not only declared his sovereign purpose, but also the means for accomplishing it. We must never

allow God's sovereignty to minimise our responsibility

What should be the part of churches in fulfilling this plan of God?

In the apostolic church there were two types of missionary activity. There is what has been described as 'Timothy-type' missions, where someone is sent to help already existing churches. Timothy was urged by Paul to remain in Ephesus to combat false teaching (1 Tim 1:3-4). Similarly, Titus was left in Crete to 'put what remained in order', ie to appoint elders in the churches (Titus 1:5). By contrast, what has been described as 'Paul-type' missions is the sending

of someone to places where there are no churches, where the gospel has never been preached. It appears that today very little of church resources go into Paul-type missions. Here is one estimate of the way money given for missions is distributed, from <http://www.aboutmissions.org/statistics.html> a web page which has a compendium of interesting information:

'Of foreign mission funding: 87% goes for work among those already Christian. 12% for work among already evangelised, but Non-Christian. 1% for work among the unevangelised and unreached people.'

'Only .1% of all Christian giving is directed toward mission efforts in the 38 most unevangelised countries in the world.'

Then there are the following statistics about work amongst unreached peoples:

IT APPEARS THAT TODAY VERY LITTLE OF CHURCH RESOURCES GO INTO PAUL-TYPE MISSIONS.

'There are 430,000 missionaries from all branches of Christendom. Only between 2 and 3% of these missionaries work among unreached peoples.'

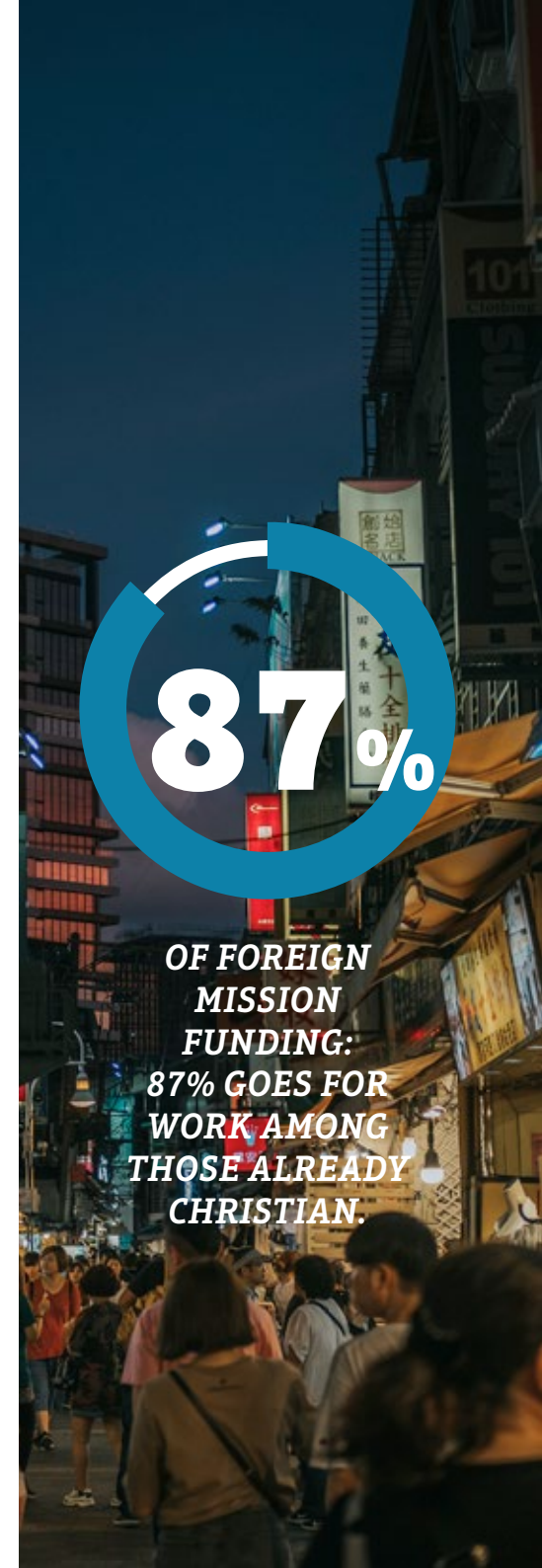
'818 unevangelised ethno-linguistic peoples have never been targeted by any Christian agency ever.'

We are not negating the constant need for reformation in places where Christianity is well established as a religion, for there is so much false Christianity, increasingly dominated by the so-called 'Prosperity Gospel'. There must be the establishment of vibrant local churches where the truth is believed and practised, where men are trained for ministry, so that in turn they can take the gospel to the unreached nearer to them. But if it is true that only 1% of the resources given by materially well-off Christians (here I suppose it is statistics for the USA), then the emphasis is skewed. We have been given a commission to reach all the peoples of the world before the end comes (Matt 24:14). There must be a deliberate focus on 'the unreached' therefore.

As I have noted above, perhaps the greatest disappointment in my 40 years of ministry in Kenya was not being able to see missionaries sent to the Rendille people, even reliable Kenyans. While God is sovereign I do not believe we can simply resolve it into sovereignty, for that can easily become a sort of fatalism and irresponsibility. From 1998 I was able to visit the Rendille people twice yearly and move around preaching the gospel, when no one else was doing it. Some Christians questioned what I was doing, for I left no



OF FOREIGN MISSION FUNDING: 87% GOES FOR WORK AMONG THOSE ALREADY CHRISTIAN.



infrastructure behind, no church building, no school or dispensary. There are those preaching now, but where are the preachers who are telling the people that they must abandon the vain things in which they trust, the traditions inherited from their fathers, and put their trust in Christ alone?

There are such powerful motives to leave all to do this very thing!

- » The plan of God is to save a great multitude, some out of every people, and Christ died to ransom them. We know that the means God has ordained to accomplish this is the preaching of the gospel. That is our responsibility.
- » The love of Christ controls us (2 Cor 5:14). We want to obey the Great Commission, because it is he who commanded us and we love him and would do anything for him. We want others to bow before Christ and worship him and give him the glory of which he is worthy.
- » Without the gospel there can be no hope of salvation (Rom 10:14-15). I wonder if we really believe this? If people do not hear, they cannot believe and call upon the name of the Lord and be saved.

It is interesting that William Carey, and others like him, are hailed by us as missionary heroes. He eagerly sought out information from reports of Captain Cook's explorations; yet today we have information so readily available in books such as *Operation World*, and on websites

such as the *Joshua Project, International Mission Board (IMB)* of the Southern Baptists. Also, travel to such places is relatively easy. I could get you into the heart of the Rendille people in a day's fairly easy drive from Nairobi.

I naïvely thought that just to make it known that we have a wide open door to the Rendille people would excite so many people. But only one couple showed interest. It was the same in Pokot North when I made it known there was a need for teachers in the Kasei Boys' Secondary School that we started. No one even enquired about coming with me to South Sudan despite my pleas.

Why this lack of interest and commitment to the Great Commission? Some would argue that Kenyans should and can do it themselves; others that the needs at home are too great. Of course, there is truth in both. But could it be the perceived danger – as there has been travelling to Rendille, at one point having an armed policeman in the car? And unknown sicknesses – I have had malaria many times, hepatitis, typhoid, frequent stomach ailments (especially my wife)! Probably it is the comfortable life, not wanting to be out of our comfort zone.

I could paint a glorious picture of the privilege of being amongst such people who give respect to others, who are willing to listen, who give such unstinted hospitality; but there are also times of exhaustion because of talking and preaching day after day, thirst because of excessive heat, and feeling filthy because of no adequate water supply. Such self-

denial is not glorious, but it is done out of love for Christ, who gave us the supreme missionary example.

Let me conclude by giving some practical things that can be done to promote an interest in 'the unreached'.

- » Encourage every young person who possibly can to spend some time out of their comfort zone, in a third-world situation, even without others from their own place to rely on, that is, with local people.
- » Scan the vast amount of literature and websites available. Isn't knowledge about the spiritual situation of the peoples of the world of vastly more importance than all the details of politics and sport?
- » Focus on one area of the world, one people, one missionary – God in his providence will make known which one.
- » Join or create a new prayer group for these particular places and people. At college I joined a prayer group for Africa. Specific needs of individuals were brought before us; giving ensued and, as with me, perhaps even one's whole life will be totally impacted!

Pray for this! ■

Keith Underhill preached the gospel in Kenya for 40 years and was a pastor of Trinity Baptist Church Nairobi from 1978 to 2018. He now lives in Liverpool and makes regular visits to Kenya for pastoral training and preaching.

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Teaching pastors in rural Kenya

Someone aptly described the importance of our recent trip: 'We have books and training, but only a few people attending our churches. They have thousands of people, yet hardly any books and often no training.' He was right: we have a wealth of theological books, good seminaries and courses, a rich church history. But the churches in Western Europe are often small and it is difficult to draw people to Christianity. In South Sudan, however, hundreds or even thousands of people go to church. Yet, their pastors are often ministering without any training, and they have no book other than their Bible or just the New Testament.

This is why the Middle East Reformed Fellowship (MERF) has built a compound in Lokichoggio, in northern Kenya just across the border with South Sudan. This centre, which was established in November 2003, has trained over 700 pastors and evangelists, and many elders and lay leaders from various tribes. Brought by charter plane from remote areas of South Sudan and other parts of East Africa, students receive intensive



Pastors from South Sudan with Klaas-Jan and Spencer

pastoral training over three months. The course is divided into four blocks, taught by pastors from Europe and the US.

In June-July 2019, we travelled to Kenya to teach the fourth block of the course. Travelling to such a remote part of Africa is an adventure in itself. However, for Spencer it was the fifth time, such that the journey and setting were familiar. Klaas-Jan joined for the first time, to see this work first-hand. Besides teaching, we preached in morning devotions and Sunday services of the local church. It has (again) been a great experience!

The 21 students came from different tribes and countries yet were following this course in unity around the gospel. As

their tribal languages differ, the course is taught in English. For some students this is a big barrier, while others cope well; certainly, it forced us to teach in very simple English.

In the lectures, we covered Mark's Gospel, Philippians and various other topics such as homiletics and aspects of Systematic Theology. It was quickly clear to us that you have to be flexible in your teaching, since a host of topics is brought up during the lectures – sometimes completely unrelated to the matter. For example: What is the relationship between faith and works? What is Liberalism? Was Jesus sinless, and why? Is baptism essential for salvation? Many questions that are of great importance to the gospel. By teaching

these men, we would impact thousands of people. What a massive opportunity! This makes it an exciting experience, and just as edifying to us as to the students!

On 18 July, the graduation of the students was celebrated with singing and a good meal of roasted goat. Spencer preached from 2 Timothy 2 about the Christian leader as a soldier working with endurance, an athlete with discipline and a farmer with perseverance. Let us pray for much gospel fruit in years to come. *Report by Spencer Cunnah and Klaas-Jan Gunnink (Kensit Evangelical Church, Finchley, London).*

For more info, see: <https://www.merf.org/fields/africa/kenya>. ■

The Manchester Martyr



The heroic story of John Bradford (1510-1555)

*This is part 2 of the story of John Bradford.
Part 1 can be found in RT issue 290.*

Part 2

Conversion

The detail and order of events following Bradford's education at the Grammar School are not specifically known. However, we do know that at some point he entered the service of the Crown Paymaster, Sir John Harrington, who was responsible for dealing with the financial affairs of King Henry VIII and his son, Edward VI. By all accounts, Bradford discharged his duties with great diligence and skill. Particular reference is made to the year 1544, three years before the death of Henry VIII, when Harrington was dealing with the financial challenges of paying the English army. Bradford's work was said to be invaluable, and his master spoke highly of his competence.

Nevertheless, just three years later, Bradford decided to pursue a career in law. His first step in pursuit of that was to attend what would now be called 'Law School', in London. It was at this school of law that he met the Reformer Thomas Sampson, a keen Christian. Under the influence of Sampson, Bradford went to hear Bishop Hugh Latimer preaching. The subject of this particular sermon was the need to 'make restitution of things falsely gotten'. In other words, Latimer was preaching that if any of us have things which have not been fairly and irreproachably gained, then those possessions must be returned. The message convicted Bradford deeply, not because he himself had defrauded anybody, but because his master, John Harrington, had been involved in some dishonourable transactions that defrauded the Crown of money, and Bradford had turned a blind eye while working for him. Following this profound

conviction, Bradford could not rest until the matter had been resolved. Richard Hone gives a convincing account:

'His conscience convicted him of fraud. Initially he was disposed to give himself as a bond-servant till full restitution had been made through his services. However, after consultation with Latimer, he instead represented the case before John Harrington and demanded that the accounts be rectified. When Sir John hesitated, he then threatened exposure which would disgrace them both. Sir John charged him with being overly precise and reported him to his sons as a foe to the family, nevertheless agreeing to make over the deficiency.

'Evidence for the correctness of the above account stems from a letter to Travers in which the salient points are outlined upon which Mr Travers spoke with Mr Latimer. Mr Latimer advised: "Wish an increase of that desire that ye have to make restitution. And whether that God will so enrich you that ye shall be able to pay it, or that He will move your master, so that he will and shall pay it, commit it to God with earnest desire and faithful prayer that at length, yet when his merciful eye shall see most meet, He will unburden you of your check; and look for his help in peace." Latimer saw it as a mercy from God that John had been given a conscience in the matter and even stated "Oh! Forgive me, that I do, in commemoration of my iniquity, much more delight, than sorrow." Latimer desired that he would experience "sorrow, a cross, vexation and perturbation of mind but in a measure that fell short of despair ... yet God is with you and in you. Who can then harm you?"

'A little later when Bradford confronts his master and expresses concern, not only that the restitution be made, but that it be done shortly out of fear of God's justice, he is accused of being over-scrupulous and of a superstitious conscience – the natural man perceiveth not the things which are of God. Bradford would not be put off concerning the urgency of the matter as he saw it, saying he would obey God rather than man.'

Bradford reports how Harrington attempted emotional blackmail, saying this would be the ruination of him and his family. When Bradford responded that he intended to declare the whole transaction to the Lord Protector, Harrington was moved by fear to make promises that the amount would be paid in full within a year. It is not surprising that he leaves Harrington's employment at this time.

It seems to be that it was through this experience Bradford came to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. His life was never to be the same. Now he knew by hard experience what it meant to fear God, rather than men. Now he was a man of conviction and courage. Now he became the man commemorated so fittingly in the statue and the plaque.

Shortly after his conversion and departure from Harrington's employ, Bradford became a student at Cambridge – the year being 1548. He began at St Catharine's and then moved to Pembroke

Hall, where he became a fellow of the college. His friend, Sampson, describes his serious approach to godly living and devotion to the Lord in this period:

'His manner was, to make to himself a catalogue of all the grossest and most enorme sins, which in his life of ignorance he had committed; and to lay the same before his eyes when he went to private prayer, that by the sight and remembrance of them he might be stirred up to offer to God the sacrifice of a contrite heart, seek assurance of salvation in Christ by faith, thank God for his calling from the ways of wickedness, and pray for increase of grace to be conducted in holy life acceptable and pleasing to God.'

Bradford took his spiritual life seriously: for this man, God always came first. He truly realised his own inadequacy and steered as far away from sin as he possibly could. He fled

from sin like Joseph fled from Potiphar's wife regardless of the immediate consequences – he was not afraid to lose his cloak, so that he might obtain a contrite heart. His approach to this difficult task of avoiding sin is notable: he meditated on past sins and failings, constantly raising them in prayer. How often do we forget the abominable way we have acted in the past? Remembrance of past unrighteous actions is essential if we wish to form a contrite heart.

About two and a half years after starting at Cambridge, Bradford was ordained

by Ridley, Bishop of London, and at this time Bradford took up residence with Ridley as one of his chaplains. Bucer had been continually urging Bradford to enter the ministry earlier, but Bradford's humble view of his own qualifications had prevented him. Bucer's own view was that:

'If thou have not fine manchet bread, [a 14th-century fine white bread], yet give the poor people barley bread, [a coarser bread going back to the Iron Age], or whatsoever else the Lord hath committed unto thee.'

On 10 August 1550, Bradford, along with Thomas Horton and Thomas Sampson (all of Pembroke Hall), was called to be a deacon at Fulham

Ministry

To facilitate our understanding of Bradford's sufferings, it is important to grasp the historical background of the reign of Henry VIII (1509-1547), because it was in this time that the Reformation took hold in England. Henry was very eager for some aspects of reform, such as the obliteration of the Pope's authority and the dissolution of the monasteries, because these things endowed him with money and power and promoted his personal agenda. However, Henry was generally ambivalent about the Reformation from the perspective of both doctrine and piety, remaining committed at heart to the old ways of the Medieval Church. He was especially opposed to putting an English Bible into the hands of the ordinary people, preaching that expounded Scripture with authority and replacing the formalism of the Mass with an evangelical Christianity that emphasised personal faith. It is true that

he could be persuaded to tolerate these things at times, but only when he was convinced that it was necessary for the 'greater good' of establishing his position as head of the Church and laying a strong foundation for the future reign of his son Edward. In his heart, Henry never forsook medieval piety.

It is therefore not surprising that, until Henry's death in 1547, the Reformation in England was riddled with setbacks, and evangelicals never really knew where the Crown stood regarding reform. This resulted in the death of many men who started out on good terms with the king.

However, Henry's death brought about a radical change. Henry's son, Edward VI, became the new king at the age of only nine, and he ruled for six years. From his own writings and testimony, as well as the path taken during the six years of his reign, it appears that he was a genuine believer, a real Christian boy. One of the most striking features of his reign was the active promotion of gospel preaching. During this time the Reformation had a chance to take hold and its progress became evident. It was in this period that John Bradford was converted, and he took up a principal role in everything Edward was seeking to accomplish across the country. It was in the middle of Edward's reign in August 1550 that Bradford was called from Pembroke Hall, Cambridge to be a deacon at Fulham.

Ridley then obtained a licence to preach for his new chaplain. This opportunity was fully seized by Bradford and great blessing ensued. It is known that Bradford preached in numerous places

Now he knew by hard experience what it meant to fear God, rather than men. Now he was a man of conviction and courage.

in London including St Paul's Cross and then for some time in Walden (hence the farewell letter to these folk just prior to his martyrdom). He called the people to repentance and amendment of life and endeavoured to sow true doctrine: Ashton-under-Lyne, Bolton, Bury, Wigan, Liverpool, Mottram, Stockport, Winsley, Eccles, Preston, Middleton, Radcliffe, and Westchester (as Manchester was formerly known) were all 'warned and warned again' by his preaching.

One of the greatest obstacles to Reformation that Edward had to overcome was the shocking lack of converted clergy. How can an unconverted preacher unfold the gospel to a congregation? He certainly can't do it with integrity or authority or conviction. In order to overcome this, Edward appointed six itinerant chaplains to go all around the country and preach. Through Edward's itinerant chaplains the populace had an opportunity to hear the gospel faithfully expounded. Bradford was one of the six chosen for this critically important task. Ryle informs us in some detail of Bradford's commission:

'Bradford's commission was to preach in Lancashire and Cheshire, being connected with those counties; and he seems to have performed his duty with singular ability and success. He preached constantly in Manchester, Liverpool, Bolton, Bury, Wigan, Ashton, Stockport, Eccles, Middleton, and Chester, with great benefit to the cause of Protestantism, and with great effect on men's souls.'

At the close of 1552, when Bradford was at Manchester, he 'treated of Noe's flood,'

and often forewarned the people of 'those plagues' which would be 'brought to pass.' And on the twenty-sixth of December, St Stephen's Day, 'the last time that he was with them', he preached a remarkable sermon from the twenty-third chapter of St Matthew. The last six verses, the gospel for the day, was the text, no doubt, he selected on that occasion, a passage eminently suggestive of that solemn and prophetic warning which he then delivered.

These were the very verses that he preached on just before Edward's death (Matt 23:34-39):

'Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city, that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. Assuredly I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate; for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord."'

Before Bradford went back to London, he prayed a prayer famously called, 'The martyr's prayer'. This is what Ryle says:

'Local tradition even yet points to the spot in Blackley, where the country people say that Bradford, during that last visit to Manchester, knelt down and made solemn supplication to Almighty God. His request at the throne of grace was that the everlasting gospel might be preached in Blackley, to the end of time, by ministers divinely taught to feed the flock with wisdom and knowledge. The martyr's prayer, it is alleged, has been answered in the continuance, with scarcely an exception, of faithful men in that place.'

A testimony to Bradford's efficacy in preaching can be found in Ridley, who said that Bradford, along with Lever, Latimer and Knox, had been the most effective preachers of Protestantism and moral reform under Edward. That is very prestigious company to keep.

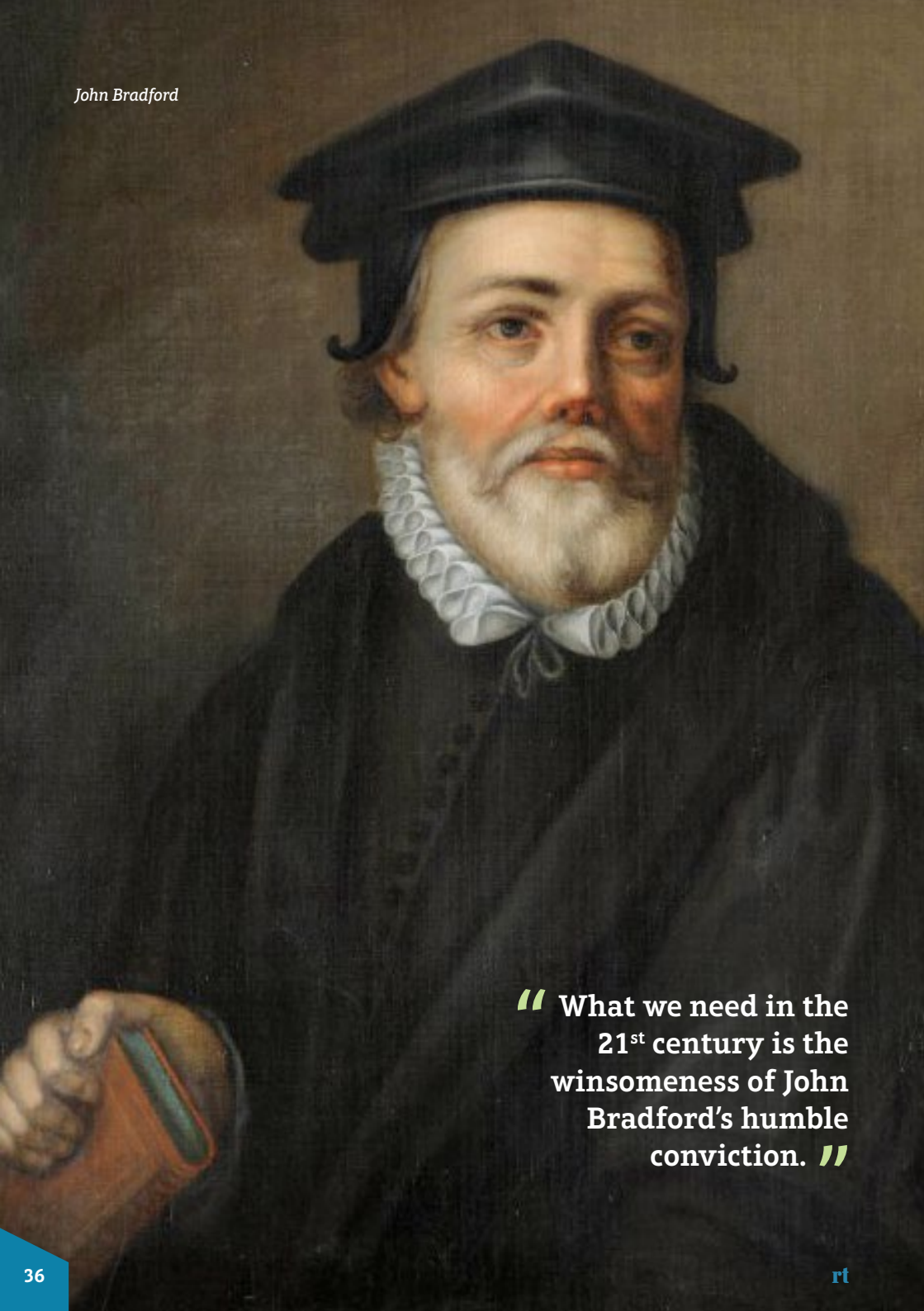
Sufferings

Unfortunately, Bradford's teaching was cut short. In 1553 King Edward died, and Queen Mary succeeded to the throne. She was not just a Roman Catholic; she was a hater of the Reformation – it was personal for her. Mary was the daughter of Henry's first wife, Catherine of Aragon, the wife that Henry had divorced. The 'justification' for the divorce had come from interpretations of passages in Scripture that came from the Reformers, and Mary never forgot this slight. Mary pursued a 'Romanist' piety that was aggressive and intense, promoting Papal authority, restoring traditional practices and persecuting leaders of the Reformation in England. Many fled to the continent, but those who stayed were relentlessly harassed, attacked, arrested and put to death.

Since John Bradford stayed in England and would not stop preaching the truths of the gospel from the Scriptures in English, Mary had him arrested. As he was led through the streets to his execution, they were lined with thousands of people. Foxe's account well describes Bradford's final sufferings and actions on this earth as he was hoisted upon the stake:

'Holding up his hands, and casting his countenance up to heaven, he said thus, "O England, O England, repent thee of thy sins, repent thee of thy sins. Beware of idolatry, beware of false anti-Christ, take heed they do not deceive you." And, as he was speaking these words the Sheriff bade tie his hands if he would not be quiet. "O, master Sheriff, I am quiet: God forgive you this, Master Sheriff." And one of the officers which made the fire, hearing Master Bradford so speaking to the Sheriff, said, "If you have no better learning than that, you are but a fool, and were best to hold your peace." To the which words Master Bradford gave no answer, but asked all the world forgiveness, and forgave all the world, and prayed the people to pray for him, and turned his head unto the young man that suffered with him, and said, "Be of good comfort, brother; for we shall have a merry supper with the Lord this night;" and so spake no more words that any man did hear, but embracing the reeds said thus: "Strait is the way, and narrow is the gate, that leadeth to eternal salvation, and few there be that find it.'"

We have already learned so much from this man of the Bible and man of the people; we have learned about the way



“ What we need in the 21st century is the winsomeness of John Bradford’s humble conviction. ”

of humility, conviction and compassion; we have seen what made him such a man through his education, his conversion and his sufferings.

However, before we leave John Bradford, let us conclude by considering two things that are particularly important for us today:

The winsomeness of humble conviction

We live in a society that values freedom above all else: freedom to believe what I want to believe, do what I want to do and even be what I want to be. This mantra has become so embedded in our culture’s value-system that any threat to it is treated like a cancer, which if allowed to survive would threaten the future of our Western civilisation. It has now reached the stage where personally held beliefs about gender must be allowed to overrule biological realities – this is what we might call ‘the sovereignty of self’. It is a dogma so profoundly believed and so deeply held that dissent cannot be permitted.

In this context the Bible-believing Christian is a dangerous threat. Here is a person whose value-system is at odds with the sovereignty of self. According to the Bible, God is sovereign and not the individual creature; we cannot bend reality to our own preferences; God will hold us to account for breaking his laws; the day of judgment that is yet to come will be a terrifying correction in perfect justice, setting straight all that has become twisted and dispelling all the darkness in which we have hidden our sinful rebellion.

These are ‘dangerous beliefs’ in

themselves, but perhaps in this form they can be dismissed as alien and afar-off and ephemeral. However, when the Bible-believing Christian claims that there is a human being who embodies all these values: a man who has lived upon this earth and made known the will and ways of God; one who has kept all God’s laws and lived wholly to his glory; a human being who lived out the truth in every aspect and manifested what it means to be an image-bearer of the divine. When we call our generation to stand before the light of the glory of Christ, then it all becomes incredibly personal. There is nowhere to hide in his presence as all possibility of relativising my life is dispelled and I am called to account. Just as the Jews and the Gentiles conspired together to plunge this light into the darkness on Calvary’s hill 2000 years ago, so their ‘children’ in our generation must do the same. Until the ‘horrible’ beauty of Christ’s righteousness is taken away, we cannot enjoy our freedom to believe and to do and to be whatever we choose.

So how can the Bible-believing Christian ever win the opportunity even to speak of the gospel of Christ and his love? Since there is a prior commitment to a shutting-of-the-ears to such reality-enforcing and freedom-denying truths, how can we ever hope to make known the gospel, which alone can bring us in tune with reality and actually set us free?

Step forward John Bradford. As we consider this remarkable man’s testimony that is so many hundreds of years old, we learn how we must be in our own day. This is the real value of studying history. What we need in the 21st century is the

winsomeness of John Bradford's humble conviction.

How did Bradford gain a hearing even amongst his enemies? Was it not by defending their right to speak, even when he disagreed with them so profoundly? Consider the way that he stood in front of his protagonist, Gilbert Borne, even as the stones and the knives flew through the air – this is no way to treat those with whom you disagree! And why did thousands line the streets when he was led away to be burned alive for his convictions? Observe his humble love even then, graciously reaching out to his enemies, forgiving them and praying for them – not wavering in his convictions concerning Christ and the truth, yet manifesting winsome humility even in death.

John Bradford's humility-with-conviction is so rare in our churches today. Some are so 'humble' (falsely-called) that they never speak out concerning any of the sins of the age (for who are we to condemn?); others are so 'convicted' that they feel they have the right to condemn everyone and everything without the slightest concern for them as people or any desire to see them saved. Is this one of the reasons why we are so ineffective in our outreach? We lack the winsomeness of humble conviction. How we need to revive the spirit of John Bradford in our churches: the man who condemned himself before he condemned others, yet always spoke the truth

concerning sin; the man who examined his own heart so searchingly that he was unable to call others to repent without first repenting himself; the man who knew that grace alone could save such a wretched sinner as John Bradford, and that same grace was wonderfully sufficient for the salvation of all the sinners around him. How winsome is humble conviction, and yet how rare?

Personal conviction in preaching is the foundation for true compassion in preaching.

The currency of real compassion

What has happened to compassion in our society? Where is compassion for the plight of the unborn, slaughtered mercilessly by the multiple thousands every year? Where is compassion for the elderly, many of whom are left in lonely isolation or forsaken in institutions that cannot provide the loving devotion which requires personal and unconditional commitment?

Where is compassion for our young people who are rudderless, aimless, careless and forsaken – ill-equipped to handle the tragic realities of life in a fallen world, many of them without loving parents or supportive family networks? Where is compassion for the friend, the neighbour, the work colleague, the person in need? Where indeed is the consciousness of these many needs all around us?

And in the church, where is compassion for the lost? Where is the willingness to spend and be spent for the cause of the gospel that men and women and children might come to Christ and be saved?

Where is the willingness to visit the elderly, care for the sick, show hospitality to the needy, and sacrifice my personal comforts for the good of others?

John Bradford teaches us that only those who trade in the currency of compassion can have any real impact for the cause of Christ. His compassion was born out of real humility and the conviction that he was as much a hell-bound sinner by nature as his neighbour, or his friend, or his enemy, or the man on his way to the gallows for some terrible crime. 'There but for the grace of God goes John Bradford' was the conviction that produced real compassion. He did not look down on others as though they were worse sinners, nor did he look past them as though they were irrelevant sinners – he looked straight into their hearts and saw sinners just like himself, who deserved the judgment of God, but who could be saved by faith in the Christ of the Scriptures. So 'there but for the grace of God goes John Bradford' becomes 'There by the grace of God can go one like John Bradford, if only John Bradford has the compassion to speak of Christ to him.' Such a spirit compelled him to preach and preach and preach across the north-west of England wherever he was able and to whoever was willing to hear – like his Saviour, Bradford loved sinners and sought to see them saved by grace.

In John Bradford we have a man of absolute, cast-iron, unswerving conviction, and yet, at the same time, a man of incredible humility; a man who would stand in the face of those who disagreed with him and say, 'Take my life, I am not backing down,' and yet then

weep for the person who was opposing him, pray for the person who was burning him at the stake, and show sacrificial kindness to the man who would arrest him three days later.

This is the currency we need to trade in. Real compassion that shows to the people around us that we are one with them as sinners, we are one with them in that we also were once lost and are still in desperate need of forgiveness every day. The striking truth is that humble conviction and real compassion are two sides of the same coin. Thus, John Bradford never preached to others before he first preached to himself, believing that personal conviction in preaching is the foundation for true compassion in preaching. All his preaching searched his own soul before it searched anyone else's. By bringing himself before the bar of God he was able to maintain personal accountability, thus empowering him to call out to others with a clear conscience and a heart full of compassion.

Humble conviction alone is winsome enough to gain a gospel hearing in our generation and real compassion is the only currency of sufficient value for the grace of Christ to be set forth in our age. John Bradford shows us this way which fewer and fewer even in the churches are following. Is it time for a fresh reformation of humble conviction and real compassion? ■

Oliver Allmand-Smith is pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Ramsbottom, UK, and one of the trustees of the Reformation Today Trust.



APC Kenya Conferences 2019

The Kenya Conference in July 2019 was set to have six conferences and ran for a month. The conferences were in Machakos, Nairobi, Mombasa, Nakuru, Eldoret and Mumias. The entire conference run would have been too long for two speakers so we had two teams covering three conferences each. For the first three conferences the two speakers were Pastor Isaac Makashinyi from Lusaka in Zambia and Pastor Steven Mena from America. The second half speakers were Pastor Jeff Gage from South Africa, born in America, and Pastor Benjamin Dean from the UK. To assist me with the administration and navigating from one area to another was Dibah Isakah from Trinity Baptist Church in Nairobi. We were very much helped in various ways by Pastor Murungi Igweta of this church who, amongst other things, rented out the church vehicle to APC for the duration of the time.

I arrived in Kenya, Nairobi on the 27 June 2019. On the 28 and 29 I proceeded to sort out the books for the six conferences with the very much appreciated assistance of

Dibah and Ebenezer Murithi. After we had sorted out, priced and packed the books we were ready for our first conference in Machakos. We had fellowship at Trinity Baptist Church in Nairobi that Sunday.

Machakos conference 2-3 July 2019

On the 1 July we drove to Machakos for our first conference. It is close to Nairobi, less than 100km away, but with the driving in Kenya and traffic it took us more time than we expected. The conference organiser in Machakos was Pastor George Wambus and the venue was to be his church. We were kindly hosted by Pastor George and his family for dinner and breakfast during our stay.

We had a good turnout with 93 delegates in attendance and 183 books distributed in sales. The talks went well with Pastor Isaac and Pastor Steven. There was no need for interpretation as the delegates understood English which gave the speakers a good flow of delivering their sessions. We also had Pastor Sam Oluoch



Pastor Isaac Makashinyi preaching

in attendance who has been a speaker at previous conferences.

The delegates were attentive and asked good questions which were answered very well by the speakers. Some of the questions asked were:

- » The Bible says all Scripture is inspired. How do we deal with matters that may seem illogical according to man's reasoning like the Tower of Babel and Cain's wife?
- » What is the role of women in the church?
- » What is your view on church membership? Is it necessary?
- » Can someone lose their salvation or are they always saved?
- » What is your take on church discipline? Should church leadership 'remove' errant members from fellowship?

After the Machakos conference we drove to Nairobi for the second conference.

We experienced Nairobi traffic in its best form on our drive back with huge congestion and amazingly reckless driving by the motorbike taxis.

Nairobi conference 4-5 July 2019

The Nairobi conference was held on the premises of Trinity Baptist Church and was well attended. We anticipated 80 people and had 78 delegates in attendance. Pastor Murungi Igweta normally organises the conference but this year he delegated the task to Ronald Bargebo who serves at Trinity Baptist.

Once again the talks went well; it was a blessing to have Pastor Murungi interpret in Swahili as he could best translate some of the theological terms fluently and with understanding. One of the attendees was Johan Grobler who is a member of Constantia Park Baptist Church in South Africa (the mother church to Birchleigh Baptist Church, to which APC is accountable). He is in Nairobi as

part of an organisation that works on Bible interpretation into Swahili and distributing it electronically. We had 68 delegates and distributed 316 books plus 136 free books.

The question and answer session went well. Pastor Isaac had a number of useful illustrations which helped the delegates grasp his answers quite well. Some of the questions asked were:

- » If church leaders are to be men, are women leaders to be trained as pastors?
- » What should I do if I attend a church and a woman is preaching?
- » If all elders are to be equal, then what are your thoughts on 'lead elders' or 'senior pastors'?
- » What should one do when you cannot openly tell the pastor that he is not teaching the truth? Should I leave the church?

Mombasa conference 8-9 July 2019

The next conference was in Mombasa where Pastor Barnabas Olare was the organiser. Pastor Barnabas has previously been a conference speaker and the organiser of the previous Mombasa conferences. We took a 5-hour-long train ride to Mombasa which was better than driving. Driving to Mombasa would have taken us 13 hours on what has been described by Kenyan citizens as a very dangerous road!

Upon our arrival at the Mombasa terminus Pastor Barnabas was waiting to receive us. It was good seeing him again.

The last time I was with him was when we did the Eastern Cape conferences in March. With his parting words he mentioned how he was looking forward to welcoming me to Mombasa in July, and lo and behold here we were! On the 6 July we had fellowship with the brethren in Mombasa with Pastor Steven and Pastor Isaac preaching. Despite the cold season in Eastern and different parts of Kenya being considerably cool, Mombasa was humid. Pastor Isaac and I were hosted by Jeff Meyers and his wife Phoebe. Jeff is an elder at the church. Pastor Steven stayed at a hotel close to the church which was to serve as our venue for the conference.

The Mombasa conference has been well attended in past years with numbers over 100. It was the best attended conference of the three as we had 104 delegates all in a Bible-teaching position, and distributed 183 books through sales and 206 free books. One of the free books we gave out was *9 Marks of a Healthy Church* by Mark Dever, translated into Swahili. This was a useful resource for places like Mombasa where many of the people speak and read Swahili. Pastor Barnabas interpreted most of the talks into Swahili. The delegates appreciated the talks given and interacted well with the speakers, often engaging them after the talks. Some of the questions asked were:

- » In our local church sometimes we have held women's services once per month. Is that biblical?
- » If your wife/husband is not supportive of your ministry should that be a reason to step down due to not meeting the qualifications of a leader or pastor?

- » My bishop is a woman, I'm quite junior in her ministry. How can I start telling her to step down in favour of a biblically founded church?
- » God has used women in the Bible to deliver his people and also women were the first witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus. How can it be that today women cannot be used to be ministers of the Word? Esther, Deborah and many more were used to deliver the Israelites. Please be clear on this as it might be challenging. Can God not use any gender?
- » What does the Bible teach on prosperity?
- » Pastor Isaac stated that we are not the ones who save our children. It is the work of God in salvation. What about an unbelieving wife? Should one resign because of her attitude?

On the 10 July we returned to Nairobi by train. Pastor Isaac had to fly out from Mombasa in order to make it to Nairobi in time for his flight home to Zambia. Pastor Steven and his sons joined me for the train ride back. I had to bid farewell to Pastor Steven and his sons as we had come to the end of their run, whilst I had three more conferences and a new team to welcome. It was truly an honour to serve with these two servants of the Lord who preached faithfully, were helpful with anything that needed to be done and endured Kenyan driving without complaint. ■

Kabelo Makgabo is the assistant APC conference manager.

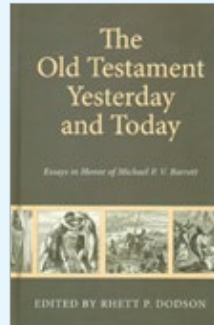
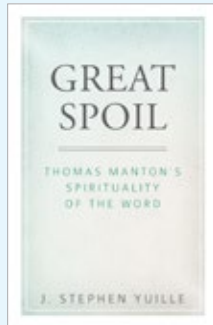
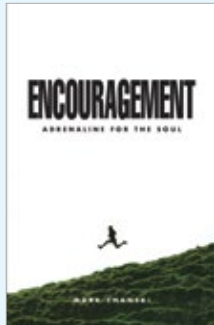
A number of other APC Conferences have been held in July and August in Uganda (over 300 attendees) and Cameroon (approx 140 delegates).



Machakos conference

New Books

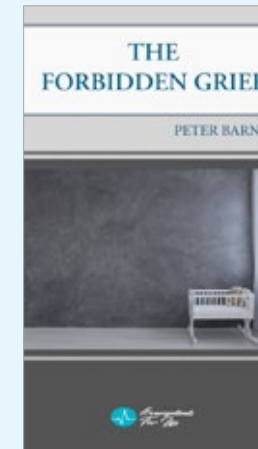
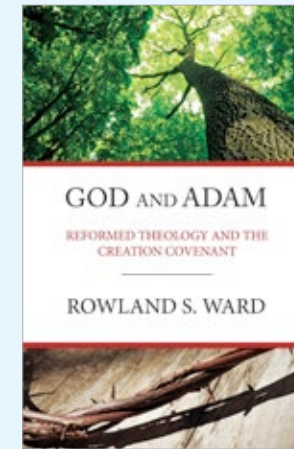
The following books have been published recently and are recommended for your attention:



- Mark Chanski, *Encouragement. Adrenaline for the Soul* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2019), 200 pages, ISBN 978-1-60178-662-3.
- J Stephen Yuille, *Great Spoil. Thomas Manton's Spirituality of the Word* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2019), 192 pages, ISBN 978-1-60178-692-0.
- Rhett P Dodson (ed.), *The Old Testament Yesterday and Today. Essays in Honor of Michael P V Barrett* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2019), 304 pages, ISBN 978-1-60178-711-8.
- Joel R Beeke, *Be Reconciled with God. Sermons of Andrew Gray* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2019), 216 pages, ISBN 978-1-60178-704-0.

- Cornelius Pronk, *A Goodly Heritage. The Secession of 1834 and Its Impact on Reformed Churches in the Netherlands and North America* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2019), 512 pages, ISBN 978-1-60178-665-4
- Joel R Beeke (ed.), *The Beauty and Glory of the Last Things* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2019), 192 pages, ISBN 978-1-60178-706-4.
- Jon D Payne and Sebastian Heck (eds.), *A Faith Worth Defending. The Synod of Dort's Enduring Heritage* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2019), 192 pages, ISBN 978-1-60178-740-8.
- Dyfan Williams, *My Sunflower Girl. Loss, Grief and Glory* (Bryntirion Press, distributed by EP Books, 2019), ISBN 978-1-78397-259-3.

New Publisher in Australia



RT recently published an article on Arthur Pink by Brett Lee-Price. This brother has started a new publishing enterprise in Australia called Tulip Publishing. I trust this name needs no further explanation for our readers as they will understand the theological position for this new publishing initiative.

The website (www.tulippublishing.com.au) states: 'Tulip Publishing is an Australian Christian publisher providing a local and global platform for authors who stand and identify within the Reformed tradition. Its aim is to provide rich resources for the kingdom within Australia and abroad, both for the edification of the saints and ultimately, the glorification of God.'

And, 'in its desire and aim to be of service to the kingdom. Each year, Tulip Publishing will donate 10% of its net income to selected missionaries carrying out the Great Commission both locally and globally.'

The first three publications are:

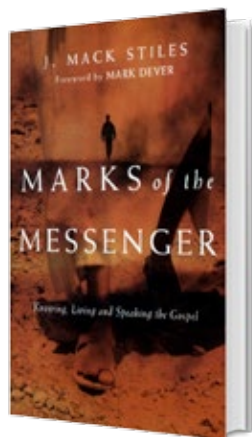
- Rowland S Ward, *God and Adam. Reformed Theology and the Creation Covenant*
- Peter Barnes, *The Forbidden Grief* (a pastoral resource for those who are grieving and struggling through past decisions regarding abortion, showing the reader where true forgiveness and restoration can be found).
- Denis G Shelton, *Discovering Christianity* A Series of 10 Talks. A 10-part audio series designed to speak to those who are interested in or enquiring about the Christian faith.

Please note that we are unable to supply these books; please contact your local bookshop.

Book Review

Marks of the Messenger Knowing, Living and Speaking the Gospel

Author: J Mack Stiles,
Publisher: Downers Grove, IL, IVP Books, 2010,
128 pages
ISBN: 978-0-8308-3350-4



This book was published some years ago, but I only recently came across it. I think it is worth reviewing as it fits very well with the theme and topics of this issue of *RT* as the subtitle of the book indicates. This is not a book to present yet another method for (personal) evangelism. Instead, the author, who worked and ministered for many years in the Middle East, gives a much deeper discussion of the need for, and the privilege of living and sharing the gospel.

In ten easy-to-read chapters the author defines what the gospel is, and warns us not to peddle the gospel, nor to assume

the gospel. He also shows us that the gospel has implications for all of life and this underlines the importance of true biblical conversion. The church and we as individual believers should declare the gospel with boldness. He ends the book with a manifesto for healthy evangelism, which is full of practical advice.

Given the author's background, the approach and advice given for evangelism transcends cultural boundaries and is widely applicable. In addressing the biblical motives and principles for proclaiming the gospel it challenges and inspires us all to bear witness to Christ. ■



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