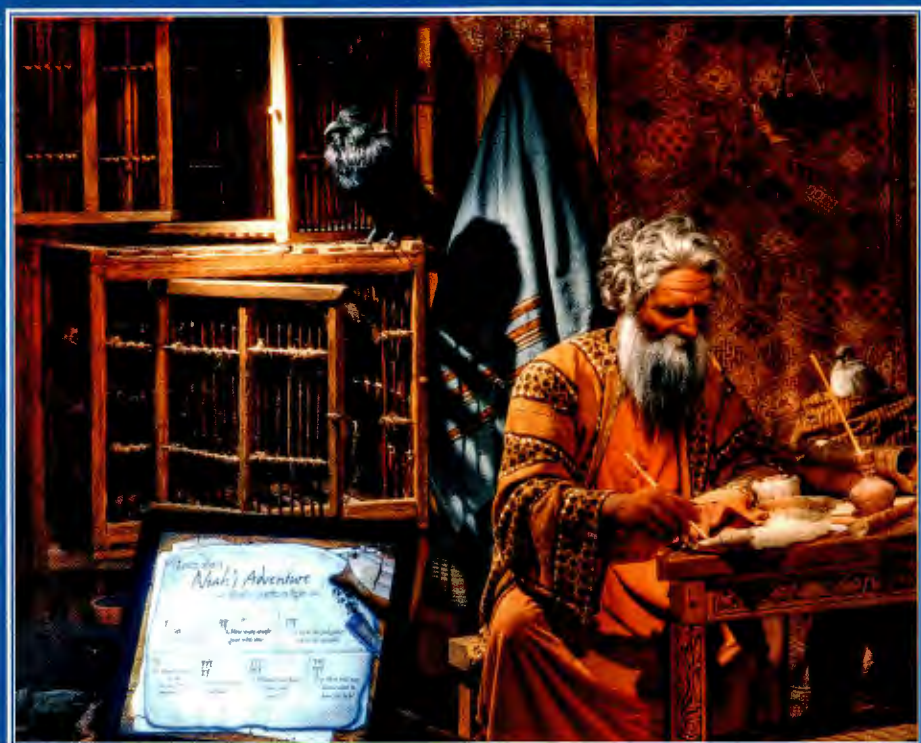


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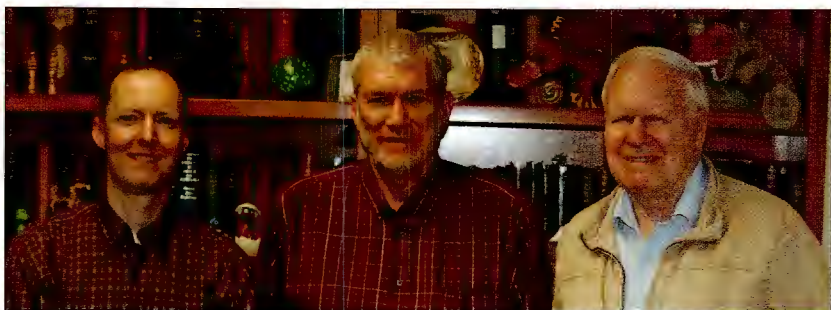
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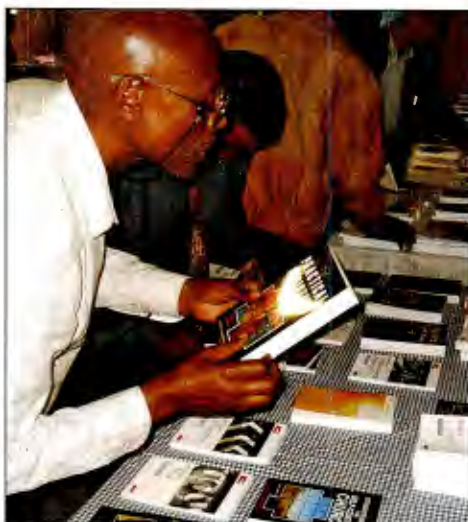
Websites www.reformation-today.org

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

<http://africanpastorsconference.com>



Featured above from left to right are Brad Garrison, (one of the elders of King's Chapel, West Chester, Cincinnati), Ken Ham the president of the Creation Museum, and the editor.



A most encouraging three-day African Pastors' Conference (APC) has just concluded in King William's Town, South Africa. 47 attended. Many books were sold at affordable prices. Victor Kanchese of Zambia who was the principal preacher is now involved in planting a reformed Baptist church in Addis Ababa in Ethiopia. Impending APCs are Bulawayo (April 24-26) and immediately following that one in Manzini the capital of Swaziland, and then Barberton, Kabokweni and Bushbuckridge. Three conferences have been planned in Malawi: Lilongwe in the north, one in Blantyre in the south and one in mid-Malawi.

Exit 11 off the 275 near Cincinnati will take you to the Creation Museum. It takes about six hours to do justice to this 27 million dollar museum of high quality. Overall it is a work of art which expounds human history from the time of creation and in particular the universal flood. Pictured on the front cover is Noah who answers questions. Featured in the museum are details of the supposed construction which were necessary for the safety of the ark. One of many experiences in the museum is the planetarium which takes viewers on a journey through space to gain an appreciation of the glory and vastness of the universe and our planet earth in relation to that.

Editorial

FROM PENTECOST ONWARDS THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH HAS GROWN and extended across the world mostly by extraordinary outpourings of the Holy Spirit. Yet it was only in the 18th century in the English-speaking world that the word 'revival' began to be used. The Bible uses the phrase 'times of refreshing' (Acts 3:19-20), and in Psalm 85 we read, 'Will you not revive us again that your people may rejoice in you?' Other Psalms such as 102:12-17 and 44 are fervent prayers for revival.

The *Reformation Today* website carries twenty psalms put into verse by David Preston. Faithful to the Hebrew text these are in contemporary language suitable for singing. There are examples of fervent bold prayer. Note the reasoning and the pleading in this verse from Psalm 102:

But you, O LORD, you sit enthroned for ever:
to you, our Sovereign, every age will bow;
you will arise and will take pity on Zion:
the appointed time to favour her is now.
O LORD, your servants love her stones, her rubble:
your glorious name all lands, all kings will fear;
for he'll rebuild us and appear in glory:
he will not scorn his stricken people's prayer.

And note the desperation expressed in this verse from Psalm 44:

Wake up, O Lord, wake up! Why are you sleeping?
Get up! Don't cast us off for evermore.
Why do you hide your face? Why don't you notice
the misery and oppression we endure?
For we are lying in the dust prostrated,
our body trampled in the dirt this day;
rise up, and come to rescue us, we beg you:
redeem us in your steadfast love, we pray.

Many, perhaps most Christians today never think in terms of revival. In some churches you never hear prayers for revival although it is possible that a visiting preacher might pray that way.

Beginners in this subject can start with tracts. Titles of these are available on the *Reformation Today* website. A good place to begin is with the tract *Is it Biblical to pray for revival?* by Dr Michael Haykin followed by *A Call for a Concert of Prayer for Revival* which opens up Zechariah 8:20-23. This includes a short review of the book by Jonathan Edwards, namely his *Call for a Concert of Prayer*. Also available on the website is a sermon by the editor on Zechariah 8:20-23.

From the tracts newcomers to the subject of revival can proceed to slightly larger works. Highly commended is a paper given by Stephen Clark with the title 1859 – ‘A Year of Grace’ given at the annual Westminster Conference in London. He describes the beginning of the revival in New York in September 1857. Clark goes on to describe the extension of this revival in Ireland and Scotland and Wales. He concludes his 27 page study with very important lessons to be observed. He emphasises that while we cannot create revival we can certainly plead for such.

A striking feature of the 1859 revival was its spread to a variety of countries. Revivals are different in character according to the genius of the Holy Spirit. We cannot tell what the main features of the next revival will be like. If we pursue the promises of God as Jonathan Edwards exhorts us to do then we can be fairly sure that there will be a global revival. John Piper in his book *Let the Nations be Glad* stresses two factors which we must never overlook. The worship of God and the glory of God lie at the heart of everything. And also as the gospel advances into nations where darkness prevails there will be sacrifice and suffering. We see that in the life and ministry of the apostle Paul. Islamic lands are drenched with the blood of martyrs. Since that blood is the seed of the Church we can expect remarkable outpourings of the Holy Spirit in the most daunting of places.

Highly commended is *Pentecost Today? – the Biblical basis for understanding revival* by Iain H Murray. Isaiah 62:6-7 is regarded as a command to pray without ceasing for God’s world-wide work to be crowned with success. My book *Give him no Rest* (EP) defines revival and explains the principal reasons why we should persevere in intercession for spiritual awakening.

Then there are inspirational books which describe previous revivals. Two easy-to-read books published by the Banner of Truth are *The Welsh Revival* by Thomas Phillips (130 pages) and *The Power of Prayer* by Samuel Prime (260 pages). The latter describes the 1859 revival. Another fine short book is *Fire from Heaven*, (EP), by Paul Cook.

The Priesthood of all Believers

Tom Wells

HERE IS A STRIKING FACT: THE OLD TESTAMENT IS FULL OF TEMPLES, priests and altars for carrying out their rituals. But outside the Gospels and Acts these things largely disappear. Why? Literally speaking we don't use any of these things in the worship of the New Covenant. I hope to make clear why this is. To do that I will use some familiar headings that help in grasping any subject: who, what, where, when and why?

Who Are Now the Priests of God?

In fact there are two categories of priests today. The first has only one member, the Lord Jesus. He is our high priest who offered himself as a sacrifice for us. He changed places with us by substituting himself for all of us who would ever trust in him. So we must not forget his priesthood. Nevertheless I want to discuss the second category of priests in this article. Every true believer in Christ is in this second group. We find both priesthoods in Revelation 5:9-10 where angels address the Lord Jesus: 'You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.' Here all the redeemed are priests, and there are lots of them!

What Kinds of Sacrifices Do Believers Offer?

Here again we have two answers. The first is: believers act as priests when they offer themselves to God. Romans 12:1-2 speaks to this point: 'Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the

pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.'

In this passage our 'bodies' take in all that we are. It is through our bodies that we express to God and others much that we think, as well as all that we do. That is why Paul calls using our bodies a spiritual or reasonable service. Often we contrast spirit and body. The NT itself uses words related to our bodies to contrast spiritual things with ungodly acts and thoughts. The words 'carnal' or 'fleshly' come to mind. But Paul is not doing that here. Instead he unites body and spirit because he treats the body here in a positive light. Carnal or fleshly things in Paul describe the way the world thinks of God when he acts or speaks. In verse two Paul assumes that all of us once practised and thought things that were fleshly in the bad sense. But our minds have been renewed so that we usually conform to God's will. We are not yet perfect or on the verge of perfection, but we are headed in the right direction. We seek to please God though we often fail.

After calling Jesus 'a living stone' Peter speaks of spiritual sacrifices in 1 Peter 2:5: 'You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.' Who offers spiritual sacrifices? – a holy priesthood, God's spiritual house or temple, that is believers in Christ (1 Cor 3:16-17; 2 Cor 6:16; Eph 2:19-22).

The NT lists some of these sacrifices in more detail. In 1 Peter 2:9 we read, 'But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.' Here Peter tells us to call others' attention to the glory of God. In this way we offer a spiritual sacrifice as priests.

Closely related to this, we must tell others the gospel. Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 4:6: 'For God, who said, "Let light shine out of

darkness,” made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.’ If we found God’s glory by hearing the gospel and looking to Christ, others will do so also. However they cannot do this unless we or other believers share the gospel with them.

Jesus left us just after speaking of this major duty in Matthew 28:18-20. He said, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.’ The One with all authority gave us our marching orders. We must praise God himself without forgetting others. More than that he promised to be with us as we do this ‘to the very end of the age’.

In Romans 15:16 Paul describes himself as ‘a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles with the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God’. By calling this a priestly duty he reminds us that all priests must strive to do this. In other words every Christian shares this duty with any and every person they can reach. While we glorify God we must not forget others. Even when the temple and literal priests were prominent in the OT, David looked beyond them to the task of every believer to glorify God, and do it before others (Psalm 69:30).

Where Do Believers Offer Their Sacrifices?

Do believers use earthly temples to do this? Do they use altars made for that purpose? I had first answered those questions with the phrase ‘almost never!’ But that was wrong. Many believers may still use such buildings or furniture. Still the important point is this: there is no NT command to do this in one place more than another. We must remind ourselves: the church building is not a temple. No room in it is a sanctuary, that is, a place more holy than any other part of it.

The answer to the question, ‘Where do believers offer their

sacrifices?’ is anywhere and everywhere. Acts 8:4 answers this by saying, ‘Those who had been scattered [from Jerusalem] preached the word wherever they went.’ In Ephesians 2:19-22 Paul makes plain that Christians are not only priests, but taken all together are the holy temple in which God lives. Hence, we are not limited in where we can offer sacrifices of praise to God. And we are not limited to one place to share the gospel. We may tell it in homes, restaurants, in cars and on planes, in recreation halls or outside walking or jogging with others. For a short time the apostles stayed in the holy city which was Jerusalem, but shortly they tackled the world. At Ephesus Paul told of Jesus ‘publicly and from house to house’. He did this to ‘both Jews and Greeks’ (Acts 20:21-22). We may praise God and explain the gospel wherever it occurs to us. We may praise him out loud or silently. We can even mumble it! And any place whatsoever is suitable.

When Do Believers Offer Their Sacrifices?

Do believers offer their sacrifices when they feel particularly holy or spiritual? No, that would terribly limit us. Do we only do it during ‘church hours’ or other set times? The answer to this too is no. A part of Christian liberty can be best understood in thinking about this. Since OT priesthood was extremely important nearly every detail was spelled out. We can read of the small group from one tribe that could become priests. The OT tells us exactly how they went about making their offerings. Beyond that, the great mass of Jews had to bring specified offerings for various sacrifices. And still further, if they brought an animal, the condition of the animal was important as well.

Let me illustrate the difference under the new covenant. I’ll begin with a question: do you have daily devotions? I’m sure you do. But the NT does not lay down any rules as to how you must have them. What must you do in your ‘quiet time’? Beyond the basic matter of glorifying God, the NT is silent. Do you pray? I’m sure you do, but the NT is silent on this. It says rather, ‘Pray without ceasing.’ That, of course is not a command just for your quiet time. The same is true for Bible reading. In the earliest age of the church Christians didn’t have

New Testaments. Before the various books were gathered together there was no NT to have. They of course had portions of the OT. But it had no rule for what was to be done in personal devotions.

I would not pretend for a moment that their situation was as ideal as ours. They worked under a great handicap that we do not have. But the point remains: they not only did not have a guide for daily devotions, they did not even have such a command. Under the Mosaic law the majority of Israelites much of the time were not regenerate believers. However this did not relieve them from serving God in various ways. But because they were not saved, any service to God was spelled out in great detail. Why this difference? Jesus explains it to the woman at the well in John 4:23: 'A time is coming and has now come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks.'

Didn't the Father always have such worshippers? Of course He did. But each and every Israelite, born again or not, had to carry out a various acts that were set forth in no uncertain terms. Some were demanded on pain of physical death. Today the NT treats true sons and daughters of God without such a threat. We are given large liberty in the way we serve God.

Why Do Believers Offer Their Sacrifices?

The Bible expects youngsters to obey their parents. But what kinds of things are they told to do? Almost every command has to do with their acts. When they are a bit older that will change. Then motives will loom larger and larger. The answer to our question focuses largely on motives. I have already suggested its answer: the changed hearts of God's true people.

Right acts can be done by all kinds of people. Of course we don't do them all the time. But to take but one example: almost all the people we know refrain from murder. They do this for various reasons, some good and some not so good. Their motive for this may be sound or it may not be. But they refrain from the act. They claim they will never

do such a thing. And by and large we believe them. More than that, we respect them.

Paul directs us to a motive for glorifying God and urging others to glorify him in Romans 12:1. We have already read that verse in the first section above, but I used it to explain ‘bodies’ rather than to speak of motives. He writes, ‘I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.’

What is the motive here? It is the fact that believers have been given mercy. If we look back to what Paul has said earlier in Romans we should be astounded at the dimensions of this mercy. We have by God’s grace been turned from the path to hell to the highway to heaven! Not only that, but it was done at tremendous cost to God himself. What are we to do in return? We’re to give ourselves up to God’s process of making us fit for heaven. That process will make us like the Lord Jesus. Why is that important? For two reasons: First, because that is the only way we’ll get there; second, if we made it to heaven any other way and were forced to stay there, we could not be happy in that state.

Conclusion

Finally, let me say something about the relative importance of the priesthood of believers. The Bible as a whole has a number of lines of truth that run clear through it. Very important ones include the nature of God as Trinity, the nature of man as fallen, the salvation God provides and the destiny of all men and women. When we consider the priesthood of believers we see how these things fall together. God as Trinity is worthy of glory and praise. The nature of man as fallen drives a wedge between God and man. But God has provided salvation for a multitude that no man can number. That, in turn, bears on the destiny of all as they accept or reject God’s pleas to turn from sin to become priests to God.

Constantine and Charlemagne

Frederick Hodgson

The Roman Empire and Constantine

AFTER THE DEATH OF IRENAEUS, THERE WERE TURBULENT TIMES FOR THE ROMAN EMPIRE. Between 235-284 AD twenty-five emperors reigned during the third century. The Roman Empire suffered near collapse. In 251 AD the Plague of Cyprian broke out and caused so many deaths that the Empire was barely able to defend itself. Germanic tribes invaded France and even reached north-west Africa. However in 284 Diocletian came to the throne and he reigned until 305. He managed to solve many of the problems by dividing the Empire into two halves (East and West). He divided each half into twelve new administrative areas called dioceses and made economic and social reforms. For the first part of his reign he exercised religious toleration but under the influence of the antichristian Galerius, one of his top administrators or Caesars, he announced four edicts between 303 and 304 AD. These dictated that all church buildings were to be destroyed, Bibles burnt and Christian worship was prohibited. Christian clergy were to be arrested and imprisoned. They were to offer sacrifices to the gods or be tortured. Finally all citizens were to offer sacrifices to the gods or be executed if they refused.

Constantius who ruled over Spain, France and Britain destroyed few buildings and executed no one. This was not typical in the Empire. Upon Diocletian's death Galerius ruled over the eastern part of the Empire and the persecution was particularly fierce. When Constantius died in 306 AD, his troops made his son Constantine governor in the North and West. He was made the new Caesar in York. The rest of the West was ruled over by Maxentius a violent antichristian. In 312 AD the tolerant Constantine invaded Italy and defeated Maxentius at the battle of Milvian Bridge. (The actual bridge crossed the River Tiber.) Constantine embraced Christianity on the night before this crucial battle in which he gained control of the western half of the Empire. Eventually Constantine defeated Licinius, the antichristian ruler of the eastern half of the Empire and had him executed. This meant that an emperor who claimed to be a Christian now had complete control over the whole of the Empire. It did not

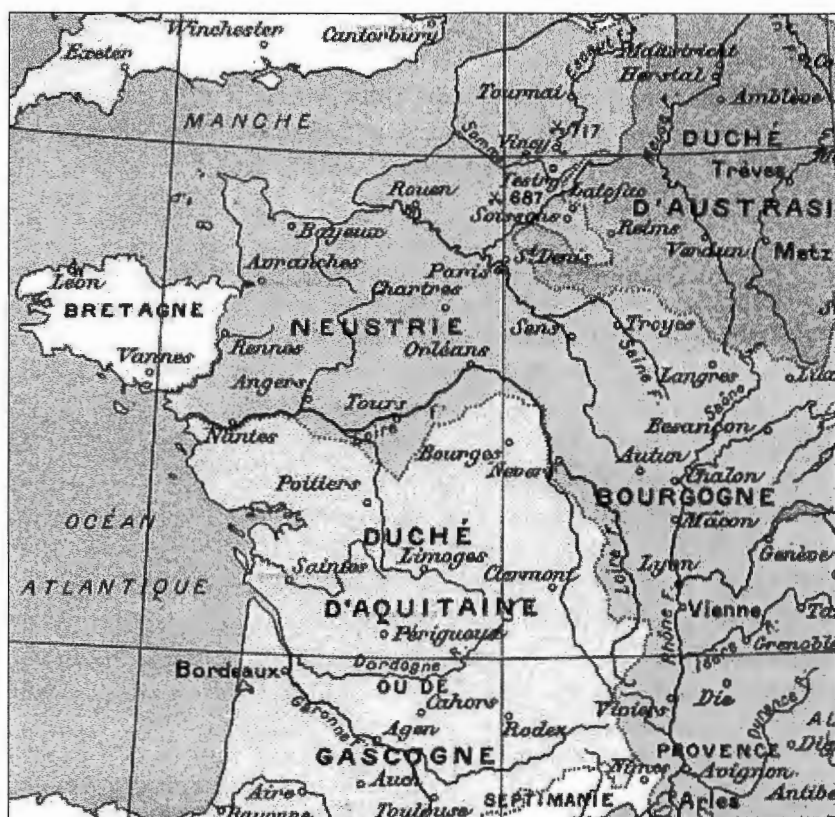
lead to Christianity's becoming the official religion of the Roman Empire, but for the first time it had an emperor who did not look favourably upon paganism. Constantine initiated administrative and legal reforms that were consistent with his Christian sympathies such as making Sunday the official day of rest. He had Christian places of worship built at his own expense and instituted reforms that were more humane such as banning crucifixion and the branding of criminals on the forehead with a hot iron.

Hilary, the Athanasius of France

Constantine intervened in church disputes such as the Arian Controversy. (Arius taught that the Son was a created being. His doctrinal position opposing the essential Christian teaching that the Son is divine was similar to that of the Jehovah's Witnesses.) In 325 AD Constantine summoned the church leaders to the Council of Nicaea with the result that its creed was formulated. He banished Arius for refusing to sign the creed. Upon the death of Constantine, his two sons reigned. Constans who favoured the Nicene Creed ruled in the West and Constantius ruled in the East. He favoured the Arians. Sadly Constans was assassinated and Constantius subsequently became absolute ruler over the Empire. He was a proud and cruel man who thought of himself as a great emperor as well as being a great theologian. He put great pressure on the western churches to accept Arianism. In the East Arianism was opposed by Athanasius (293-373 AD) who stood his ground against the Arian bishops, but the West found a lesser-known hero in Hilary of Poitiers (315-68 AD). He wrote an influential defence of the doctrine of the Trinity after he had been banished from France to Asia Minor. Whilst in exile in Asia Minor he heard Arian hymns and this inspired him to write orthodox hymns. His hymns were then used in France when he returned from exile in 361AD. By this time Constantius had terrorised most church leaders throughout the Empire into accepting a form of Arianism.

Jerome, Vigilantius and Relics

The fourth and fifth centuries have been described as 'the golden age' of the early Church fathers. Prominent church leaders of this time included men like Chrysostom, Jerome and Augustine of Hippo. Around 370 AD Vigilantius was born at Calgurris (the modern Caceres or perhaps St. Berrand de Comminges) in Aquitania. His father kept an inn on the Roman road from Aquitania to Spain. Vigilantius had obvious talent and he was sent for theological training



A map of France at the time of Pépin

at Nola (near Naples). His teacher there was Paulinus, who was actually born in Bordeaux in about 354 AD. His sponsor was Sulpicius Severus who seems to have been a landowner as well as being a church leader. On his return to Severus he was ordained. Upon the death of his father he was sufficiently well endowed to visit Jerome who was then living in Bethlehem. He spent a long time with Jerome but was then dragged into a dispute with Jerome and accused him of being an Origenist. (Most eastern bishops were Origenists in that they held that the Son was not a created being. He was uncreated and divine, eternally begotten from the Father's essence; but they held that he was inferior to the Father in his divine nature – a degree less divine than the absolute divinity possessed by the Father. This was not the same as saying that Christ had the same essence as the Father. It fell short of being Trinitarian.)

Vigilantius left the renowned Jerome and on his way back to Paulinus he spoke about Jerome to those he met and this naturally displeased Jerome. Vigilantius eventually returned to Gaul, possibly after having a short pastoral charge in Barcelona. After some years he wrote against church practices that had crept into the church and this brought a stinging reply from Jerome in his treatise *Contra Vigilantium*.

It is perfectly understandable that the bodies of those martyred for Christ should have been treated with respect. Upon the death of Stephen 'Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him' (Acts 8:2). During the early centuries of the Church, this careful respect for the bodies of leading Christians descended into something that amounted to worship and confidence in their relics. Vigilantius wrote against the superstitious reverence paid to the relics of holy men as they were carried round churches in costly vessels or silken wrappings to be kissed, and to have prayers offered to them. He objected to late watchings (vigils) at the basilicas of the martyrs, often accompanied by scandals, burnings of numerous tapers and alleged miracles. He also objected to sending alms to Jerusalem and urged that money should be spent on the poor in each diocese. Objecting to monks vowing poverty, he particularly spoke out against the evils of insisting that the clergy should remain unmarried.

Vigilantius was strongly supported by the bishop of Toulouse but Jerome was held in such high regard that over a period of time the warnings of Vigilantius became unheeded and his words were lost in the mists of history. They were still echoing around in France and Spain however as evidenced by a tract written by Faustus of Rhegium (c405-495 AD), an influential semi-Pelagian. The practices that Vigilantius spoke against were almost unchecked until the sixteenth century.

Gaul and the Franks

As the Roman Empire became weaker, various Germanic tribes such as the Visigoths invaded Roman Gaul. The most significant migrating tribes were Franks. The Frankish king Clovis I united most of Gaul under his rule by the end of the fifth century. The Franks were to dominate the area for hundreds of years. Charlemagne (742-814), otherwise known as Charles the Great or Charles I, expanded the Frankish kingdom into an Empire that embraced much of Western and Central Europe. He also conquered Italy and Pope Leo III

crowned him Emperor Augustus in 800. This made him a rival of the Byzantine Emperor based in Constantinople in the East

Muslim Invasion of France

When Caesar conquered Gaul, Aquitania was bounded by the Garonne river (which reaches the sea near modern Bordeaux), the Pyrenees and the Atlantic. During the reign of Augustus the province was extended northwards up to the Loire River. As the Roman Empire collapsed in France, the Visigoths ruled this part of France, their capital city being Toulouse. However, they were in turn defeated by the Franks at the battle of Vouillé and subsequently were expelled into Spain. By the beginning of the eighth century Aquitania was the name given to the region bounded by the rivers Garonne and Loire. The rulers of the region had strong links with the Vascones south of the Pyrenees. A united realm was set up in which Odo the Great (d. 735) was the overall ruler. This state of affairs was suddenly brought to a halt when a Muslim army invaded the region having conquered the Visigoths who lived south of the Pyrenees in present day Spain.

Muhammad had died in 632. From 634 Muslim armies swept out of Arabia and invaded the Byzantine Empire. They stormed across Egypt and entered north-west Africa, where they engaged the Berbers who lived in this region. After fifty years of savage fighting, the whole of North Africa was in Muslim hands. (It must be remembered that North Africa was at one time full of Christian churches.) In 711 a combined force of Arabs and Berbers invaded Spain and by 718 most of Spain was in their control apart from the northern coastlands that continued to be controlled by the Christian Visigoths.

Apart from those living in Arabia, people were not forced to become Muslims. However, Christians were reduced to second-class citizens. All Christians had to be governed by a local bishop who was politically responsible for them. Every Christian was required to pay a tax, which was the same for each person regardless of wealth or property. Christians had to wear distinctive clothing and could not ride a horse or wear a sword. Church bells could not be rung to alert congregations that it was time for worship and marriages between Muslims and non-Muslims were illegal. Christians broke the law if they evangelised Muslims and the death penalty was applied if a Muslim were converted to Christianity. Many people who had been brought up as Christians realised that they would be more prosperous if they converted to Islam.

There was persecution of a more aggressive nature in parts of the Muslim Empire but the Berber Muslims in Spain often left Christian communities alone for centuries as long as they did not engage in evangelising Muslims.

A Muslim army of Arabs and Berbers stiffened with recruits from Yemen and the Levant then attacked the south of France. Odo defended Toulouse and the attacking army was defeated in 719. Its leader Al Samh ibn Malik was killed. However, in 730 Abdul Rahman a Yemeni was appointed to lead the Muslim army. 'That army went through all places like a desolating storm,' reported an unidentified Arab. Bordeaux was sacked and captured and at the battle of the River Garonne Odo was overwhelming defeated by the destructive power of the Muslim cavalry. He and his leading nobles fled to the east to obtain help from Charles Martel, a Frank from Austrasia (north-eastern France).

Defeat of Muslim Armies in France

Martel had seasoned troops at his disposal and he marched with these along with conscripts to defend the Franks from the hordes of Muslims that were attacking 'Christian Europe'. Abdul Rahman had no idea of the force that had been mustered against him and he pressed on towards the Loire. His army was not as disciplined as that of Martel and was defeated in the Battle of Poitiers in 732. Rahman himself was killed and the Muslim army lacking leadership retreated to Spain. This was a turning point in the history of Europe. Rahman's son then attempted another invasion of France following the instructions of the Caliph. He dispatched a force by sea, which landed in Narbonne on the Mediterranean coast of France in 736. Martel descended on this army with his disciplined army reinforced by Lombard troops and the Muslims were driven out of Montfrin, Avignon, Arles and Aix-en-Provence. Nîmes, Agde and Béziers held by Muslims from 725 were also liberated and the Muslim fortresses were destroyed. The Muslim forces were left isolated in Narbonne (east of Carcassonne) to be finally driven out by Martel's son Pépin in 759.

Rise of Charlemagne – Emperor of the Romans

Pépin's son was to dominate the areas that are now known as France, Germany and Italy. Charlemagne (742-814, sole ruler over the Franks from 771) was an enormous character, not only in his physical stature (he was reputed to be seven feet tall), but also in terms of his influence in political, religious and cultural affairs. Charlemagne was temperate and detested drunkenness. He loved learning and spoke Latin and understood Greek. Whilst he ate his meals



Charlemagne

he listened to music and to men reading books to him. He loved history and interestingly he appreciated readings from Augustine's works, especially his classic *The City of God*. He was a great soldier and his campaigns went as far as central Europe in the east, Spain to the south and west and into the Mediterranean. He clashed with pagans in the East and Muslims to the South and West. On Christmas Day 800 a grateful pope (Leo III) crowned him 'Emperor of the Romans' (Leo III had been badly treated by the Romans and Charlemagne's advisor Alcuin of York [730-804] encouraged him to intervene on behalf of the unfortunate Leo).

His Spanish campaigns extended his rule as far as Barcelona, but he did not fare well in Spain and as his army retreated it was defeated at Roncesvalles by the Basques. He liberated northern Italy from the Lombards rescuing Pope Adrian I (772-95) from their power. His greatest struggle lasting thirty years was against the pagan Saxons. He demanded that pagan Saxons be baptised on pain of death. He is reputed to have ordered the beheading of 4,500 Saxons caught exercising pagan practices after their baptism. His atrocities drew the brave rebuke from Alcuin, 'Faith is a free act of the will, not a forced act. We must appeal to the conscience, not compel it by violence. You can force people to be baptised, but you cannot force them to believe.' Alcuin was eventually listened to and in 797 the death penalty for paganism was abolished.

Spiritual Ignorance and Attempts at Reform

Alcuin of York was the most influential man behind the Carolingian Renaissance that occurred under the protection and encouragement of Charlemagne. For twenty-two years Alcuin encouraged reformation of monasteries, building of libraries and education. Under his influence the use of the Latin language was revived and became the international language of western civilisation. A font was developed upon which our modern printed letters are based. Alcuin revised the text of the Latin Bible and produced the standard version of Jerome's Vulgate. He encouraged Charlemagne to order the bishops to set up proper training for priests and monks. Every parish had to have a school for the education of boys. A college was established in Aachen under Alcuin's direction in which logic, philosophy and literature were taught.

Upon the decay of the Roman Empire, under the influence of the invading Germanic tribes, education had suffered. In particular Christian pastors had become ignorant. The content and role of the sermon had diminished as a result of the pastors' loss of knowledge. This ignorance helped the growth of superstitious practices. Sermons were delivered to the people but these homilies were often readings of other people's work. There would be a different homily read for different dates in the year.

Alcuin was not the only academic sponsored by Charlemagne. Paul the Deacon (a Lombard), Paulinus of Aquileia and Theodulph of Orléans (a Gothic Spaniard) were prominent in their contribution to the Carolingian Renaissance. Paul the Deacon wrote sermons for festivals and saints' days, which were used in the Catholic Church for the next thousand years. Theodulph wrote the popular hymn, 'All glory, laud and honour to Thee, Redeemer King'. It is clear that Charlemagne had a high regard for learning. He gathered academics from far and wide.

Charlemagne and the Christian King

He was a religious man in that he saw himself as being the spiritual and political head of the Empire. He appointed bishops and intervened in theological matters. He saw himself as appointed by Christ to rule over his kingdom rather like the Old Testament kings. He did not think of himself as a priest in the sense that he should conduct sacraments. However, he felt it right for him to decree that all priests should wear a long black gown called a

cassock and attempted to make the priests submit to a moral code that he prescribed. He made it compulsory for everyone to observe Sunday as a day of rest. Normal labour was prohibited, but there were exceptions such as carrying food and military supplies and burying the dead. If disasters occurred within his empire, he saw them as a judgement from God on sins and ordered fasts. If battles were won, then public thanksgiving was ordered.

As spiritual head of his Empire he saw himself as ruling in the place of the Trinity. He was the 'vicar' of God. He saw the pope and his bishops as being 'Christ's vicars'. Their role was limited solely to that of being a mediator and therefore they were inferior to him. This produced rivalry for power between the pope and the emperor. The pope claimed that he had crowned Charlemagne and therefore he was overall ruler. Charlemagne resented this and regarded himself as the pope's superior. He was encouraged to do this by Alcuin in words like, 'Our Lord Jesus Christ has set you up as ruler of the Christian people, in power more excellent than the pope or the Emperor of Constantinople, in wisdom more distinguished, in the dignity of your rule more sublime. On you alone depends the whole safety of the churches of Christ.' Other Carolingian churchmen supported Alcuin. Cathwulf wrote, 'Always remember, my King, that you are in God's place. You are set to guard and rule all his members, and you must render an account for them on the day of judgement. The bishop is on a secondary level; he is only in Christ's place. Therefore ponder within yourself how you can diligently establish God's law over God's people.' In summary, the pope saw himself as superior to Charlemagne and Charlemagne saw himself as superior to the pope. The clash for power between the state and the church was to be a feature of church history for centuries. It was to result in persecution of faithful Christians and religious wars. France and other countries were to suffer because of the failure to distinguish between the roles of Church and State.

Two doctrinal arguments that Charlemagne involved himself in were the role of icons and whether the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father alone or from the Father and the Son.

Churches in the East held that it was appropriate to bow down before images and light candles and burn incense in front of them. They claimed that icons worked miracles. Charlemagne and his advisors such as Alcuin rejected all this. They put forward a view that images did have a value in teaching stories about Jesus and Church history. They rigorously opposed any form of

worshipping such images and dismissed miracles associated with them as being the fruit of human imagination or the work of demons. In announcing this view they did not even consult the pope.

On the matter of whether the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son, the Carolingians took the view that this was correct and rejected the eastern view that he proceeds from the Father alone. Despite the veto of Leo III, they added to the Nicene Creed, which said that the 'Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father inserting the words in Latin 'and from the Son'. This was ratified at the Council of Aachen in 809. The split between the Western Church and Eastern Church was widened by the influence of Charlemagne, but again it was apparent that he took the lead over the pope in spiritual matters. (Actually the pope agreed with the Carolingians in theory, but disagreed with the insertion of the extra words in the creed.)

Upon his death in 814, Charlemagne was succeeded by his son Louis the Pious. He generally followed the principles of his father, but did not possess his father's talents. The Empire was divided into three, each part being ruled by one of his three sons. The area now known as France was ruled by Charles the Bald (reigned 843-877). Another son ruled over what is now Germany and the third ruled over a strip of land between the other two countries.

The power of the pope was checked by the power of Charlemagne and it was to have been expected that the papacy would become more assertive as a result of Charlemagne's death. Successive popes tried to be assertive in the absence of the former imperialism of Charlemagne, but they no longer enjoyed his protection. As a result various Italian nobles dominated popes in turn and this led to the corruption of the bishop of Rome. The popes were no longer able to take an independent moral or spiritual lead.

Conclusion

The concept of the Christian State began with the conversion of Constantine and was further developed by Charlemagne. The concept of 'Christendom' took hold in Western Europe during this period. The big question arose as to whether the State should be in submission to the Church or the Church should be in submission to the state. Up to the conversion of Constantine it was simply recognised that the Church and State were different entities. The Reformation in the sixteenth century led some Christians to return to this earlier view of things and Church and State leaders fiercely persecuted them.

John Wesley – Friend or Foe?



John Wesley

Was he Friend or Foe of Evangelical Christianity?

Steven K Mittwede

THE ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION TURNS ON THE THEOLOGICAL ORIENTATION of the person being questioned. Without doubt, someone in the Wesleyan tradition would give first place to Wesley in his pantheon of theological heroes. Conversely, one in the traditional Calvinist line is more likely to view Wesley negatively. This postulation is borne out not only in books written – from both theological vantage points – about Wesley and Methodism, but also in theological treatises issuing from both camps. Reformed and Wesleyan writers alike have long recorded the mutual animosity of Calvinists and Arminian Methodists. For example, a travelling Methodist preacher, John Pawson, wrote in 1785 to one Charles Atmore concerning a new work beginning in the town of Ayr: ‘I hope a door is opened in that place which the Calvinistic devil who reigns in Scotland will not be able to shut again.’ From the other side of the fence, Dutch renaissance man Abraham Kuyper wrote thus:

It is unfortunate that Methodism has worked havoc in our Reformed churches...For it was the influence of Methodism, was it not, which, in some evil hour, led some of our churches to suppose that ‘regeneration’ and ‘conversion’ are identical?

Such maledictions have their provenance not in simple biases against someone or something that is ‘other’ but, rather, are symptomatic of deeper ills. Certain key doctrinal differences have given root to bitterness between the two camps.

In the interest of intellectual honesty and full disclosure, it is incumbent upon me to identify myself as one in the Reformed stream of thought and practice; thus, the present analysis will be made from that perspective. However, I am not without sympathy toward and a level of agreement with certain emphases and perspectives of Wesley and his followers. Yet some of those who have sprung from the Wesleyan root — and not Wesley himself — are those most frequently and most vociferously defamed by theological opponents. I will endeavour, therefore, to focus on Wesley alone, and not become distracted by his theological offspring. My goal herein is to succinctly analyse several key aspects of Wesley’s thought and, from there, work toward an answer to the question in hand.

Divergent Doctrines

John Wesley was ever loyal to the Church of England and, therefore, drew generously from the wells of her beliefs and practices. However, in many areas of his theology, Wesley resembled most the English, or Puritan, version of the Reformed tradition. In particular, the similarity of the *ethos* of Wesley and the Puritans is most notable in their respective teachings regarding the outward manifestations of the Christian life — the practical application of the Christian gospel in the daily lives of the believers. Thus, Wesley was something of a theological eclectic. This was borne out by his use of the Westminster Shorter Catechism, but not without deletions and corrections, especially of issues related to election, predestination and perseverance. In his abridgment of Puritan literature Wesley was keen to omit material ‘which would unduly limit sanctification within this life’.

Prevenient Grace

In line with Puritan and Reformed teaching Wesley believed that man must be enabled by God even to respond to grace. However, he posited the idea of prevenient grace; that all men — as they are, separated from God because of sin — ‘are enabled by God’s gift of “preventing grace” to accept or reject saving or convicting grace’. This universal grace ‘restores to each man a measure of “free will” so that men might respond in faith to the grace offered them by God. Thus, man “becomes a responsible moral agent”.’ Puritan Richard Baxter insisted on a similar aspect of ‘common grace’, no doubt a precursor to Wesley’s idea of prevenient grace. However, many in the Reformed tradition would claim that Wesley opened the door to Pelagianism or, alternatively, that he in fact allowed for degrees of election.

It would seem that Wesley's doctrine of prevenient grace flies in the face of the clear teaching of Romans 3:11,12. Either man is totally depraved or he is not. Of course, total depravity does not mean that men are as wicked as they can be, only that they cannot contribute in any way to their own salvation. Although in Wesley's construct of prevenient grace such grace is considered to be *from God*, in so far as it is extended to all it allows all the possibility of responding, thus diverging radically from the Reformed doctrines of predestination and election (Eph 1:4,11; 2 Tim 2:10; Rev 5:9). The question that must be asked is this: If man is otherwise depraved and hopeless, and if all receive prevenient grace as Wesley supposed, why would not everyone respond? Thus, in Wesley's construct, the 'ball' for salvation lands firmly in the court of man, and individual reason and powers of analysis and decision can lead to or away from security in Christ. Where now is grace?

Admittedly Wesley was suspicious of predestinarianism, imagining that it would lead to Hyper-Calvinistic excesses and thus limit the preaching of the gospel; he rightly insisted that God's free offer of grace be extended to all. However, his fears were largely ungrounded in so far as believers in the Reformed tradition have often been on the cutting edge of missiological advances and exemplary in their evangelistic fervour. First-hand examples of this outreach mentality in Wesley's own experience were embodied in his Calvinistic friend and associate, George Whitefield, and also in the leaders of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodism of his own day, such as Howell Harris, Daniel Rowland and William Williams.

Baptismal Regeneration

Seeing himself as an arm of the Church of England, Wesley naturally regarded infant baptism as the norm for church life. He clearly regarded baptism as a 'new birth' and the initiation of God's work of regeneration, although he allowed that a person may *not* be reborn at baptism if that person is born of water but not of the Spirit. Wesley accepted that the washing of the waters of baptism actually removed the stain of original sin. In this way, an infant who is baptised becomes perfect, even if only until that infant should sin willingly. Thus, by baptism, the child becomes, morally, a *tabula rasa* ("blank slate"), albeit temporarily.

Although baptismal regeneration is accepted in some circles of Christianity, the traditional Reformed view of baptism sees this sacrament only as symbolic of the regeneration that has already occurred by divine grace poured out into the human heart and, therefore, not as efficacious in itself for the removal of sin. A potential danger that emerges from the doctrine of baptismal regeneration is that a single deathbed 'washing' might be viewed as ensuring

salvation after a lifetime of wanton, careless living; thus, the essence of salvation (justification by faith) is possibly cast aside and hope placed in a Roman Catholic-like sacrament resembling final unction. In other words, whether at the deathbed or not, the ritual itself can become considered salvific. Thus, the object of faith can become the ceremony of baptism itself rather than Christ and his finished work.

Even in covenantal Reformed circles, by baptism an infant is included in the faith community, just as infants in Israel were included by means of circumcision (Gen 17:9ff). Yet there is no concept of regeneration accompanying this ritual; it is only a sign of covenant-participation. Unless one also accepts the concept of household salvation (that all of the children of believing [elect] parents are also saved), the baptism of an infant (or for that matter, anyone else) cannot be deemed efficacious unto salvation. Therefore, Wesley's doctrine of baptismal regeneration is clearly problematic when viewed from within a Reformed framework. However, it must be admitted that the Reformed camp hosts a number of different understandings of baptism, its significance and timing, and these different views date back at least to the Puritans.

Sanctification, Second Crisis Experience and Perfection

Harald Lindström notes that the gradual process of sanctification was an essential condition in Wesley's soteriology. Nevertheless, Wesley allowed for instantaneous 'entire sanctification' which, of course, fuelled the fires of detractors who accused him of teaching the possibility of sinless perfection in this life. Monk, while also pointing out that Wesley emphasised the gradual nature of sanctification as the norm for the Christian life, notes that Wesley held out entire sanctification as a 'possibility and goal for all believers'. In fact, in a letter to his brother Charles, John Wesley wrote, 'Go on, in your own way, in what God has peculiarly called you to. Press the *instantaneous* blessing: then I shall have more time for my peculiar calling, enforcing the gradual work.' Yet Wesley's perfection was imperfect in so far as he allowed for involuntary or unwitting transgressions. Thus, for Wesley, one could be 'perfected in love' or 'entirely sanctified' if there were no known sin (voluntary transgression of known law) in his/her life.

Wesley's expectation of a crisis within the gradual process of sanctification, albeit consequent upon repentance and faith, opens a theological Pandora's box, at least from a Reformed perspective. While indeed many Christians may have 'reviving' experiences that propel them forward in the Christian faith, to prescribe a second crisis experience effectively establishes a class system within Christianity, with theological haves and have nots. In such a system we

would have those who are mature and those who are immature, or spiritual and carnal, or even empowered and powerless. Even sympathetic biographer Heitzenrater notes that '...Wesley is beginning at times to allow for some qualitative distinctions and levels within the definition of Christian'. It is not surprising, then, that some of Wesley's theological offspring (especially in Pentecostal and Charismatic circles) have popularised these ideas, and made them the basis for effective ministry. However, Charismatic scholars Max Turner and Michael Green have cogently argued against the two-stage model of Spirit reception which is based on the classical Pentecostal paradigm of subsequence. As Green notes:

But let us not make the mistake of allowing the change from sub-normal to normal Christian living to create a necessary doctrine of initiation in two stages...Baptism in the Spirit is the common lot of all Christians. Nowhere in the New Testament are Christians told to wait for it, or to seek it, or to receive it.

This position does not, of course, preclude being filled with the Spirit; in fact, Christians are exhorted to 'be filled with the Spirit' (Eph 5:18). Thus, discrimination is made between baptism in the Spirit that occurs at regeneration, and subsequent filling (e.g. Acts 4:8, 7:55), which may and should occur repeatedly as a function of obedience and dependence (Gal 5:25).

Although John Wesley himself may not have suggested that a second experience was necessary for obedient and effective Christian living, his allowance for and encouragement of a second crisis experience gave rise to error among some of those who followed in his doctrinal wake. One not unexpected consequence of Wesley's teaching of second crisis experience was the idea of sinless perfection, mentioned above. As Wood notes, Wesley rejected this doctrine and maintained that all have need of continuing to grow in grace. For Wesley:

Always what was said about the instantaneous work has to be seen in the context of the gradual...The crisis of entire sanctification is never isolated from the process of spiritual development, which both precedes and follows it.

In analysing Wesley's position, though, we are confounded by the fact that he wrote different, conflicting things on this subject at different times. To say that 'Wesley believed or taught this or that...' may very well lead us into error in our judgements of him. Not that Wesley would accept any idea of abrogation in his works; rather, it is likely that his ideas changed as his own understanding developed and matured. We would no doubt hope for such a charitable

analysis of our own writings. Nevertheless, imprecision in his own explanation of entire sanctification has issued in much confusion. While Scripture is clear that believers are no longer slaves to sin (Rom 6:17), it also makes it patently clear that anyone who claims to be sinless is a liar (1 John 1:8). Because of the flesh, the Christian – though justified by and before God and, thus, counted righteous – will always in this life wage war against sin (e.g. 2 Cor 10:3-5).

Eternal Security and Perseverance

Without question Wesley is to be commended for his strong emphases on salvation by grace through faith, holiness and assurance. Wesley desired that others would have a strong assurance of salvation, even as he had gained in his famous Aldersgate experience. He saw assurance as ‘a divine conviction God works in...the spirit’, not a matter of emotional feeling.

Yet in one vital point Wesley departed from the Reformed position. Because he rejected the doctrines of election and predestination, he taught that it was presumptuous to believe ‘Once saved, always saved.’ Of course, Wesley was correct in rejecting a Hyper-Calvinistic confidence in one’s election that could lead to licentiousness, as powerfully pictured and condemned in John Buchan’s historical novel, *Witch Wood*. Certainly, faith must be accompanied by works – righteous, fruitful living as an expression of a spiritual reality – for ‘faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead’ (Jas 2:17).

However, the validity of Wesley’s argument must be questioned in light of the scriptural evidence. If Christ’s atoning sacrifice was initially effective to save one from the penalty of sin (in the act of justification), should it not also be effective in keeping that one justified? Wesley’s position seems to require the person to keep him/herself saved. As Williams has shown, to Wesley, ‘the claim to full assurance of faith implies not a full conviction of future perseverance, but a conviction of present pardon’. Of course, anyone in the Reformed tradition would understand perseverance not as based upon faultless living, but upon a faultless Saviour. Obviously there can be self-inflicted stagnation or lack of progress toward maturity in the Christian life (e.g., Heb 6:1), but this should not be seen as jeopardising the justification that did not depend upon the recipient in the first place. Thus, perseverance should not be viewed as a ticket to licence but, rather, as a guarantee of the efficacy of Christ’s atoning work. The Christian’s assurance is that God’s grace — poured out to mankind in Christ — is sufficient for justification, *and* sanctification and, eventually, for glorification. Consequently, the limits to assurance that Wesley imposed may have undermined assurance more than he suspected Calvinism of doing, with its doctrines of election and predestination.

Experience and Emotion

There is no question that John Wesley gave a greater place to personal experience, emotion and extraordinary manifestations than did the Reformers. Even in his own day Wesley was roundly criticised by Anglican clergymen of ‘enthusiasm’, a strongly abusive term, apparently understood as ‘a vain belief of private revelation’. Many of Wesley’s journal entries and letters describe dramatic events such as apparent demon expulsions, winning over of vicious hecklers or people otherwise rabidly opposed, and emotional mass conversions. These things are not in and of themselves to be despised; after all, the ministries of Jesus and the apostles, as recorded in the Gospel accounts and Acts, were characterised by such things (e.g. Mark 2:21-28; Acts 9:1-22; 13:44-49).

However, Heitzenrater admits that Wesley ‘added direct human experience of divine reality as an important criterion for understanding religious truth’, thus adding to ‘the typical Anglican trilogy of authorities (Scripture, tradition, reason)’. The Reformers would likely have taken issue with tradition and reason as sources of authority, at least apart from the light shed by Scripture, and would certainly have been wary of allowing human experience a place of authority.

Was Wesley’s emphasis on experience excessive? Brian Edwards has trenchantly argued that it is a dangerous delusion to attempt to imitate certain powerful effects of the work of the Holy Spirit. These manifestations or signs are not part of the warp and woof of every revival and, thus, should not be prayed for as ‘a sign of reality’. Edwards concludes that Wesley’s error was that he prayed for and expected these signs, and it was these very signs that disrupted his meetings; he ‘encouraged far more emotional outbursts in his meetings than Whitefield, so he got them!’

The New Testament record is clear on this count: ‘For God is not a God of confusion but of peace,’ and ‘...all things should be done decently and in order’ (1 Cor 14:33,40). Corporate worship and – by logical extension (insofar as is possible) – public evangelistic meetings should be characterised by orderliness, not by confusion or mayhem. However, if what we might normally consider to be disruptive clearly accompanies the giving of the Spirit in greater measures, as in some of the Welsh revivals, we should be happy to endure a little ‘smoke’ if with it comes the ‘fire’.

Conclusion

As pointed out by Weakley in the preface to his modern rendition of some of Wesley’s writings, Wesley is the spiritual father of more than 35

denominations, including the United Methodist Church, and the spiritual grandfather of the Salvation Army, the Church of the Nazarene, and also Pentecostal, Full Gospel, Holiness and Charismatic renewal groups. But it would be criminal to demonise Wesley for the errors and excesses of any of these groups. For example, the overall theological laxity of the United Methodist Church is a relatively recent phenomenon, as are the much-debated Toronto Blessing and Brownsville Revival (Pensacola Outpouring). Wesley is certainly not culpable for later heterodoxy and heteropraxy, such as are embodied in certain aspects of the ministry of Charles Finney, but some of Wesley's lack of clarity or precision in his explanation of certain doctrines and his emphasis on experience seems to have provided fertile soil for subsequent error.

Taking into consideration only his doctrines that clearly or apparently diverged from those of the Reformers, and that caused tremendous controversy in his own day, Wesley *might* indeed be considered a foe of evangelical Christianity. The aforementioned mutually critical diatribes flying between the Wesleyan and Reformed camps capture well the antagonism and distrust sometimes engendered by theological differences. However, Wesley's ministry was used by God to save thousands of souls, and to spur many others on in the Christian life. He had remarkable achievements as a preacher, undoubted organisational skills, and a keen eye for budding leaders whom he could and did appoint to continue the work in the evangelical revival. As an individual minister of the gospel, Wesley's life of selfless service and sacrifice was exemplary. His passion for Christ and the Christian gospel, his intensity and industry, and his burden for lost souls are unimpeachable, almost Pauline!

In closing, I must echo the opinion of Calvinistic preacher Charles H Spurgeon:

'Most atrocious things have been spoken about the character and spiritual condition of John Wesley, the modern prince of the Arminians. I can only say concerning him that, while I detest many of the doctrines which he preached, yet for the man himself I have a reverence second to no Wesleyan; and if there were wanted two apostles to be added to the number of the twelve, I do not believe that there could be found two men more fit to be so added than George Whitefield and John Wesley. The character of John Wesley stands beyond all imputation for self-sacrifice, zeal, holiness, and communion with God; he lived far above the ordinary level of common Christians, and was one 'of whom the world was not worthy'.

Steven K Mittwede

EQUIP! Team – Ankara, Turkey

Kuwait

In February 2012 an Islamist Member of Parliament in Kuwait threatened to draft a law to remove all churches and prevent construction of new churches. This is consistent with the attitude in the Kuwaiti Parliament, which is considering implementing strict Shari'a law.



Kuwaiti MPs call for ban on construction of churches

Photo: arabianbusiness.com

On February 17, 2012, Member of Parliament Osama Al-Monawer stated that he would be presenting 'a draft law to remove all churches from Kuwait because Kuwait is an Islamic country where churches are not permitted to be built'.

Responses from inside and outside Kuwait have been mixed. One source quoted in Al-Jardah suggested that Monawer was speaking only of a moratorium on new churches. Another said, 'the demolition of churches is totally unacceptable as it is against the Kuwait Constitution.'

The Deputy Chairman of Kuwait Graduates Society, Dr. Bader Al-Dehani pointed out that 'according to Article 6 of the Constitution, Kuwait is a democratic state and some Kuwaitis are Christians who have the right to practise their chosen religious beliefs.'

Some believe Monawer's threat comes in response to a report in January 2012 that a member of the Kuwait royal family had become a follower of Jesus.

When a Kuwaiti delegation mentioned the proposed law to the Grand Mufti (the highest authority in Sunni Islam) in Saudi Arabia, he declared that since Kuwait is part of the Arabian Peninsula, 'it is necessary to destroy all churches in it.' He based this on the hadith (saying of Muhammad) on his deathbed: 'There are not to be two religions in the [Arabian] Peninsula.'

The Grand Mufti then called for the destruction of 'all the churches in the region'.

Kuwait is number 30 on the Open Doors World Watch List 2012 of the world's worst persecutors of Christians.

Syria

What do you do if your country is invaded by armed gangs set on taking over your country and forcing upon her extreme Islamic law? And what do you do when these armed gangs take it upon themselves to eliminate Christians? It is too late in the city of Homs where it is claimed that 200 Christians have been killed by insurgents. We never hear anything about this from the media.

This is not to pronounce righteous the existing regime in Syria. However the questions raised are major issues.

South Africa

Legislation does not always go against the Bible. We can be thankful that on Friday, 27 January 2012 the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA) denied TOP TV a licence to broadcast three porn channels. The decision came after a lengthy process of public consultation after pay TV network Top TV's application to launch three porn channels.

Right to dignity

ICASA spokesman Jubie Matlou said it was decided that women's right to dignity outweighed Top TV's right to freedom of expression, and the rights of

viewers to receive pornography on television. 'The authority will produce a reasoned document within 30 days,' he said. It appears that ICASA may have taken into account points made in the Christian Action Network's written and oral submission.

In our submission we had pointed out that not only does pornography infringe on the constitutional rights of children to be protected from harm, it also discriminates against the rights of women to dignity and protection from hate speech. Pornography often depicts women in degrading, humiliating ways and as sex objects. Women are also often called derogatory names and subjected to violent acts.

Protect marriage and family

Dr Isak Burger, its president, said: '(The) government must act decisively to protect society's most vital institutions – marriage and the family.' He added that thousands of children were being exposed to sexually explicit images, and called on the government to introduce legislation to eradicate the proliferation of pornography on TV and the internet.

Top TV applied for permission in July 2011 to launch the three new channels. ICASA subjected the application to a public consultation process, receiving 13 written submissions on the application and holding public hearings on 16 January.

Top TV was given an opportunity to respond to those opposing its application, which it did in writing on January 17. Matlou said ICASA had weighed up all the submissions and had finally decided to turn down the network's application.

Socially responsible

The Family Policy Institute (FPI) described ICASA's decision as 'socially responsible'. FPI director Errol Naidoo said it was a 'bold decision' that placed the health and welfare of the family above the profit motives of irresponsible broadcasters. He said 'The South African public's overwhelming opposition to pornography on national television is now a proven fact'.

Eritrea

All evangelical churches were closed following the government's ban on all religious groups other than Orthodox, Catholic, Lutheran or Islamic in 2002. Anyone discovered to be an Evangelical is tortured and forced to revert to the registered denominations. If they don't, they are held in military camps without trial. Around 1500 are believed to be imprisoned; at least five died in 2011. Others were released so they wouldn't die in custody. In 2011 there was a renewed crackdown on house churches; at least 23 believers were imprisoned.

Pray for the many Christians who have fled the country. The majority of believers are recent converts. Pray that they may be physically and spiritually sustained. Pray for those imprisoned in inhumane conditions and also for worldwide awareness of the plight of Eritrean Christians.

USA

Missions Conference

I have just returned from The Kings's Chapel 20th Missions Conference, West Chester, Ohio. This annual event was initiated through the ministry of Tom Wells who was presented with the gift of an Ipad in gratitude for his emphasis and work to promote this annual missions conference.

Missions begin at home and at one of the nine sessions Rob Gerard described how he and his wife Jenny make an average of about 25 visits a month to retirement homes organising worship services tailored to edify the needs of the frail and the weak residents. From China came Yuguo Zheng who declared that the revival in China is leading to training of missionaries to reach the 574 unreached people groups mostly situated in vast areas of Western China. Gordon Taylor who is the co-ordinator of ARBCA described his travels in Chile and the Argentine and also France and Switzerland.

Darrell Castle described the establishment of an orphanage in Romania and Ken Clarkson described his ministry to the homeless in downtown Dayton.

My contribution was to provide an overview of the history of missionary endeavour and draw out relevant lessons for us today with an emphasis that the essence of missionary work is church planting (Acts 13-14). In a second presentation my purpose was to inspire what we can do individually to advance missions. Also I had an opportunity to use a power point presentation to explain the growth of the African Pastors' Conferences of which there are now 19.

Editor

The Book that Made your World

A review article by Mostyn Roberts

The Book that made your World

– How the Bible Created the Soul of Western Civilisation.

Vishal Mangalwadi

Thomas Nelson, 2011, 400 pages, ISBN 978-1-59555-322-5

AFTER THE DARK AGES, WRITES VISHAL MANGALWADI, 'THE BIBLE WAS THE POWER that revived Europe...At the dawn of the twenty-first century, the West is again losing its soul. Will it relapse into a new dark age or humble itself before the Word of the Almighty God?'

This book by a native of India is about the Bible's foundational influence on Western civilisation and therefore indirectly, through the West, on civilisations like his own. The author was spurred into action by the ill-informed but widely held views of Arun Shourie, a Hindu intellectual who reproached missions, attacked Jesus and ridiculed the Bible. Mangalwadi courteously responds, and dedicates the book to Shourie.

Anyone thinking it may be relevant only for 'the West' need not fear. It is much more about the Bible and its influence on human lives and societies than about the West in itself. In a way the West is a test case for seeing how the truth of God reveals itself to be truth for all people, always and everywhere (that is, absolute truth for all of life). A brief survey of the book's contents is the best way to review it.

The book

Mangalwadi takes the suicide and writings of rock star Kurt Cobain as an entry point, to highlight the emptiness of modern culture. This expands to a discussion of: the development and place of music in Christian culture (from Augustine, through Luther, to Bach); the importance of a Creator God, of the knowledge of God and of ourselves made in his image, and of

the fact that once we lose touch with who God is we lose touch with what we are. Modern man, he says, 'can make good robots but cannot even *define* a good man'. As to the Bible and those who criticise it, 'It transformed me as an individual and I soon learned that, contrary to what my university taught, the Bible was the force that had created modern India.'

After this introductory chapter he gives an insight into his own conversion and his attempts to help the poor in India. He discusses the poverty, the inability of Hinduism to deal with it and the corruption and intimidation he had to contend with.

Moving more positively to the impact of Scripture, he reminds us of the old story of five blind men trying to identify an elephant, confused because they are all holding different parts. The only answer, which Mangalwadi gives, is of course that we only know it is an elephant because someone comes in from the 'outside'. We need revelation to make sense of life. Reason alone cannot bring us to Truth. He discusses the 'self' as a 'creative creature' and the implications of that. Under the heading 'The Seeds of Western Civilisation' he discusses (a) humanity, (b) rationality and (c) technology. (a) We need to see the dignity of humanity from Genesis and the Incarnation. Through the story of the death of a child in an Indian village he recounts how he realised he was dealing with a clash of worldviews, of attitudes to the value of life and human beings, not merely a clash of ethical principles. (b) As to rationality, what saved it after the Greeks gave it up? 'It was the Bible's teaching that eternal life was to *know* God and Jesus Christ.' The fact that God communicated his word motivated people to learn reading and writing. (c) The Bible meanwhile stimulated technological development because biblical spirituality is 'this worldly' and activist as opposed to say, Buddhism, which is contemplative. For the Christian, work is virtuous but unnecessary drudgery is not. Technology is a good thing; illustrations are given of particular developments.

Our author then turns his mind to the revolution in thinking introduced by the Reformation. Heroism now took on more the pattern of Christ. Meanwhile translators (Wycliffe, Luther, Erasmus, Tyndale) became 'world-changers'; the Bible was elevated above men. There then followed an intellectual revolution and this introduces the longest part of the book.

First in *languages* the Bible paved the way. To read the Bible people needed languages. Bible translation has been calculated to have created seventy-three modern literary languages in India alone including Hindi, Urdu and Bengali. There was a worldview behind this. Buddhism taught people to empty their minds and seek absolute silence through meditation techniques. The Bible taught that a loving God communicated because he is love; people need to read his Word.

Mangalwadi traces something of the impact of the Bible on *literature* in the West, and then looks at its influence on *education*. The Bible teaches us to be content with a partial and finite knowledge that grows bit by bit. It is God-like to develop the intellect, not wait for some mystical experience whereby knowledge comes 'all at once'. Men like Charles Grant, Wilberforce, Carey and Lord Macaulay pushed for education of Indians from Christian motivations. Transformed religious presuppositions lead *via* education to a transformed economy.

Science developed because of the Bible. Man is supposed to have dominion over the earth; we are not merely part of nature, nor are we to worship nature, but to be stewards of it. Even those who wrongly condemn the Bible for supposedly authorising exploitation of the earth at least implicitly admit the power of the Bible to influence history. But crucial to the development of science was the literal reading of the Bible as opposed to allegorical reading, or seeing Genesis 1 as a source of spiritual symbols. Alfred North Whitehead famously said that the origin of modern science was 'the medieval insistence on the rationality of God'. China had scientific brilliance but did not develop science because it had no conviction of an almighty Creator and law-giver. Further, Bacon and Galileo gave empirical observation its honoured place. Islam did not develop science either, as it was never able to critique the Greek thought that permeated it and the inherent pantheism which seeped in from the Greeks. Christian ideas such as God's being separate from the world, and redemption being not absorption into God but restoration into his likeness, provided the distance from the world and the perspective on the world that modern science needed.

'What Made the West the Best?' is the provocative title of part VI. *Morality* is first examined, especially the ability to trust people in business. 'God watches us' is a basic conviction – we might call it the fear of God.

There is personal freedom, but also freedom from the kind of corruption that cripples many nations. Wesley's social concern is discussed, but not before the impact of his gospel is emphasised. Mangalwadi insists that it is the gospel that liberates, not Christianity as merely some philosophy; at the same time the impact it makes is not dependent on every person in the culture being a Christian.

The *family* in its Western form is a biblical institution and has been a huge source of strength in Western society. Monogamy and its empowerment of women is specifically Christian. Marriage, not the monastery, was for Luther the school for character. *Compassion* is a fruit of the Spirit. Medicine developed in Christian, not in Arabian, countries, despite their great advances, because they did not have a caring culture such as the Bible creates. The biblical work ethic and *true wealth* are examined. 'How did Japan and China become so successful then?' the sceptic may ask. Well, they imitated and improved – particularly the Japanese. We cannot understand Japan without understanding Holland, asserts the author, because in the eighteenth century Japan made a study of Holland's methods and applied them.

Liberty and the rule of law are the hallmarks of our democracy, whereas the Greeks only developed a form of mob rule. Biblical eldership led to forms of 'checks and balances' in government; the 'separation of powers' also came from the Bible. The transforming effect of *mission* is seen through the gripping story of how the Hmar head-hunters of northern India came to receive the Bible, Christ and then education and advancement at every level. Was it wrong or imperialistic to change their dead-end culture? asks Mangalwadi. Of course not.

The *future*? The sun need not set on the West. Sadly relativism is our only virtue now. Ease of divorce and abortion are merely forms of resignation and fatalism. We need a return to the psychology of Edwards' *The Religious Affections*. The Great Awakenings of the eighteenth century shaped America and Great Britain. *'The Bible is not merely a handbook of private piety. It is the very foundation of Western civilisation.'*

Assessment

I shall deal with one weakness of the book and then its strengths. The *weakness* is that despite the weight of reading and personal experience behind it and the wealth of careful argument and facts within it, there is

still a rather journalistic and anecdotal character to some of the writing. While scholarly research is referred to, and other arguments are a matter of logical deduction, more research needs to be done. Examining the spiritual roots of a civilisation, however, and what moved the people involved, is difficult.

The *strengths* of this book are many.

- (i) The author is not only a first-class intellectual with a profound grasp of philosophy and history, but he has personal experience of the different fruit borne by different religions. This gives the book a ring of truth which is invaluable.
- (ii) It tells an important story that is actively suppressed or ignored by the world and not sufficiently appreciated by Christians: the story of the fruit of the Word of God in human society. Evangelicals particularly rightly insist on personal transformation; they less frequently hold out the hope of cultural transformation. This is partly understandable in that the New Testament does not emphasise it, and Evangelicals fear sliding towards some sort of 'social gospel' that has lost its roots in personal redemption and spiritual experience. Nonetheless, if God's Word is Truth, you would expect it to release men not only from their bondage to sin, death and Satan, but from all manner of the effects of sin in the world. No-one expects such liberation or transformation to be perfect in this life, nor that the effects of the gospel in society will always be spectacular, but it would be dishonouring to God and his Word to expect less than some – even substantial – transformation. After the gospel of justification by grace through faith, the dominant 'transforming truths' are the revelation of the nature of God, the identity of human beings as created in his image, the goodness of Creation and the reality of the Fall.

Creation is not part of God nor identical with him (as pantheism supposes), nor is man merely one with the rest of creation but stands in a unique relation to God as a 'creative creature' and image bearer to exercise dominion over the earth. From these fundamental truths flow the kind of blessings to humanity that the world, but particularly the West, has seen in the last half millennium.

- (iii) Mangalwadi is not afraid to state in his book the heart of the gospel of Jesus Christ, nor to insist on the importance of the Great

Awakenings of the eighteenth century in shaping culture. In other words, he recognises implicitly that the Bible's teachings are not enough in themselves, true as they may be; the Holy Spirit must regenerate men and women and if there is to be a cultural shift this must be in sufficiently large numbers. The Word and Spirit together are the key in the lock of fallen human nature that releases both human potential, individual and corporate, and also the potential of creation as redeemed people, or those influenced by them, to serve God in the world. One interesting point Mangalwadi makes is that when Holland (for example) became Protestant, churches which had been open seven days a week, now only opened on Sundays, not because people had become less religious, but because they had become more so. Their religion was now the worldly spirituality of the gospel, engaging them in the world of work six days, and in God's house on the first day. Medieval Christianity could achieve only so much; it needed the Reformation and all that followed truly to release the transforming power of the Bible.

- (iv) It should inspire Christians to remember their responsibility in public life. They are standing in a long line of Evangelicals who have seen such responsibility as a logical application of their faith; they are also doing no more than obeying the command to love their neighbour.
- (v) This is therefore an immensely encouraging book which helps Christians to see more clearly, with solid argument and facts, what we all sense and know in our hearts – that really the Bible is 'the book that made our world' and can transform cultures as well as individual lives.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this is a great work. Rarely does one come across a book that is at the same time wide-ranging, clearly argued and, in an age when the Christian faith and the Bible are under attack, highly relevant. It would do you good, intellectually and spiritually, to read it. It will remind you of the tragedy of the intellect darkened by sin and of the poverty of false religions and human philosophies. It will encourage you by showing you what great things the gospel and the Bible, under God, have accomplished in the past and may accomplish again.

Mostyn Roberts, Pastor, Welwyn Evangelical Church and Lecturer in

Small Churches

The big picture for small churches (and large ones, too!) *by John Benton. EP.*

Ben Mildred

FROM THE DEDICATION (To the Lord's faithful and often despised little flocks all over the world) to the end of the book it is clear that John Benton has a heart and a burden for small churches and an intimate knowledge of their struggles and strengths. This book is written with the aim to both encourage and help churches to 'survive and thrive as a small congregation' as the subtitle puts it.

The author starts by pointing to the choice that all members of small churches face: do we give way to discouragement or do we fix our hope on God who delights to work through small things? It is a challenging question and pertinently the next chapter is on Satan's tactics against local churches which deals with the issues of deviation from the truth, division in the body, decadence among the saints, discouragement under the circumstances and distraction from our purpose, with the chapter ending by drawing encouragement from the story of Gideon and how God uses our weakness to show his glory.

The next chapter, 'Love's Vision', is a reminder of how desperately modern society is in need of the gospel and how a church needs to have a vision of love, the love of God for sinners. Dr Benton quotes Paul: 'And now these three

remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love' (1 Cor 13:13) as a reminder that as a local church we are to reach out in Christ-like love to everyone. Five practical objectives are then raised for a church to work towards: quality presence, quality welcome, quality teaching, quality hospitality, quality prayer.

Quality presence is about the church's being a spiritual entity owing its existence to God. Pastor Benton writes, 'In the audit of eternity there is no group which is more important in your locality' (p.63). Therefore, churches have to be a presence in their locality by communicating Christ and all the truths of the Bible and living out Christ in the lives of its members through witness, fellowship and consistency. He recommends that church members live in the local area of the church in order to make these things easier.

The second practical objective is quality welcome and the author argues that small churches are ideally suited to providing loving welcomes as they can easily recognise visitors and can have deeper love for each other which if healthy will overflow to others. He warns against the dangers of trying to impress others instead of being ourselves.

Quality teaching is the topic of the third chapter and this includes a challenge to

not become blinded by self-righteousness where the teaching is always against others and members are left wondering how anyone going to another church can be saved. Dr Benton then runs through the truths of 'first importance': the authority of the Bible, the doctrine of Christ, penal substitution, justification by faith alone, conversion and the second coming.

The author then goes on to discuss quality hospitality which he again highlights as an area of strength for a small church. When hospitality is often neglected it is uplifting to have this practice expounded. He writes, 'Is our home an area where God and his work are never really invited? Hospitality is a way of showing the Lord that our homes belong to him' (p.127).

The final objective is quality prayer. The author argues from Matthew 18:19 – 20 that small church prayer does not depend on numbers but on unity and agreement. He then proceeds to urge every church to get on its knees in prayer because modern society is so hard-hearted and blind and only God can set them free. Following on is a discussion of the practicalities of a prayer meeting and a reminder that revival always comes through much prayer.

John Benton deals with the issue of discouragement. First he highlights the cause of discouragement then the consequences and thirdly the cure. Interestingly, one of the cures for fighting the discouragement of leaders is not just to pray and encourage them but provide them with adequate finance as well. This chapter is particularly

encouraging as discouragement is something many have had to grapple with; our thoughts are taken from ourselves and to the grace, glory and sovereignty of God.

The next chapter on the resources of heaven begins by affirming some of the advantages of small churches over large ones. The theme of reliance on the Lord and not on ourselves is developed.

The highlight of the book is the last chapter on the letter in Revelation to a small church, the letter to Philadelphia. I had never thought of this letter as being so applicable to little flocks but this study draws attention to it and the encouragement that Christ gives to a church of little strength. From this letter the author reinforces all the lessons in his book to look to Christ and his power, to trust him as Head of the Church and to take the opportunities that open up before us. Jesus recognises our weakness, self-doubt and fear but he promises to be with us in all things. We are taken on to a consideration of the rewards Jesus promises to the Church, his ownership of us and how: 'those who are belittled, troubled and sneered at on earth in the cause of Christ will be applauded in heaven' (p.195). Christ is exalted as the best of all masters who owns and cares for every little flock.

Coming from a small church and having faced discouragement and distrust of God and his plan for my church I found this book to be heart-warming and refreshing. This book is heartily recommended to all whether in small churches or large.

A letter to the Prime Minister

5, The Green,
Welwyn,
AL6 9EA

The Rt. Hon. David Cameron MP,
10, Downing Street,
London,
SW1A 2 AA,

23rd March 2012

Dear Prime Minister,

Re: Same-sex marriage

You must be aware that there are many Christians in this country who are experiencing a variety of reactions to the proposal (or is it decision?) to permit same-sex marriage. Reactions include disbelief, that such a major change in the family and social structures of this country could go through without a serious debate about the issues, or at least get a mention in your party manifesto to put people 'on notice'; disillusionment that political power is being used to override the sincerely held convictions of millions on a major issue; and disappointment at the way our very valid objections and questions are being sidestepped or met with contempt or abuse. For example one has heard too often phrases like 'you're just behind the times – in fifty years everyone will wonder what the fuss was about'; or (from various sources if not governmental ones) 'you're just homophobic and discriminatory'.

A letter of response I have received from the Home Office relies again on two main arguments. The first is a policy of 'fair treatment and equal opportunities'. That is a laudable policy but does the government draw no lines as to who can get married? What about minors, or (as mentioned above) people who want to marry more than one spouse, or adults who feel 'committed' to children? The government obviously feels authorised to draw lines somewhere, or will these limits also disappear in the years to come? Until all differences are withdrawn, is not the government guilty of discrimination against polygamists and paedophiles? What is happening is not the pursuit of equal opportunities, but a removal of natural, tried and tested structures to

make way for the satisfaction of personal desires. That is not equality; it is licence.

Equality is not the eradication of differences and distinctions. The statement that man is made in God's image (the basis for equality) is immediately followed (in Genesis 1:27) by 'male and female he made them' (the basis of diversity and indeed, marriage). Both need to be protected.

The second limb of the departmental argument is that this affects civil marriage, not religious marriage. This misses the point entirely. Marriage is marriage; it may be celebrated in a civil form or a religious form, but the act is the same; it is between a man and a woman. To try to distinguish the two does not commend these changes to Christians – nor, I should have thought, to most 'faith communities'.

What is particularly worrying about this matter, apart from the merits of the issue itself, is the way it has been handled. It has been rushed through with a mere nod in the direction of consultation. Christians sense that their case is not being listened to and that they are dismissed as 'dinosaurs', and worse. The feeling in many churches is that the 'gay' lobby has the ear of government and the media; we are being steamrollered, and yet all we are doing is standing up for the values which you, in your excellent speech on the Bible in December, acknowledged were at the heart of British law, life and culture. I really struggle to see how your convictions so warmly expressed in that speech square with ditching the biblical picture of marriage.

Christians are already being squeezed out of public life, frequently over the 'gay' issue. The fact that our views seem to be dismissed as irrelevant or a relic of a bygone age, does not encourage us to respect, or get engaged in, the political process. The government is seen by Christians as being arrogant and dismissive. You can ill afford to lose from the political realm those who have on good authority long been regarded as 'the salt of the earth'.

If you could find time to respond I would be very grateful.

Yours sincerely,

Mostyn Roberts.

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